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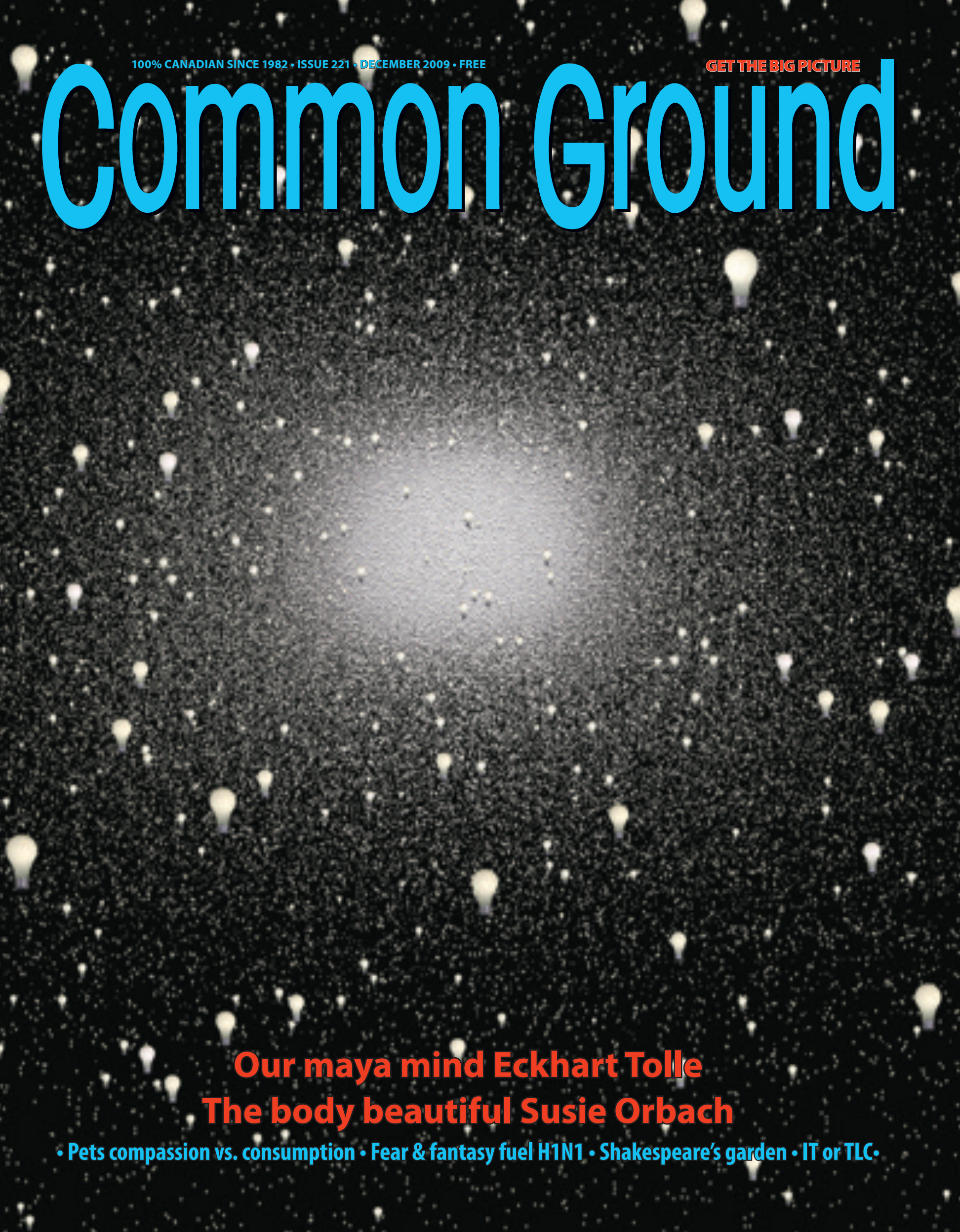

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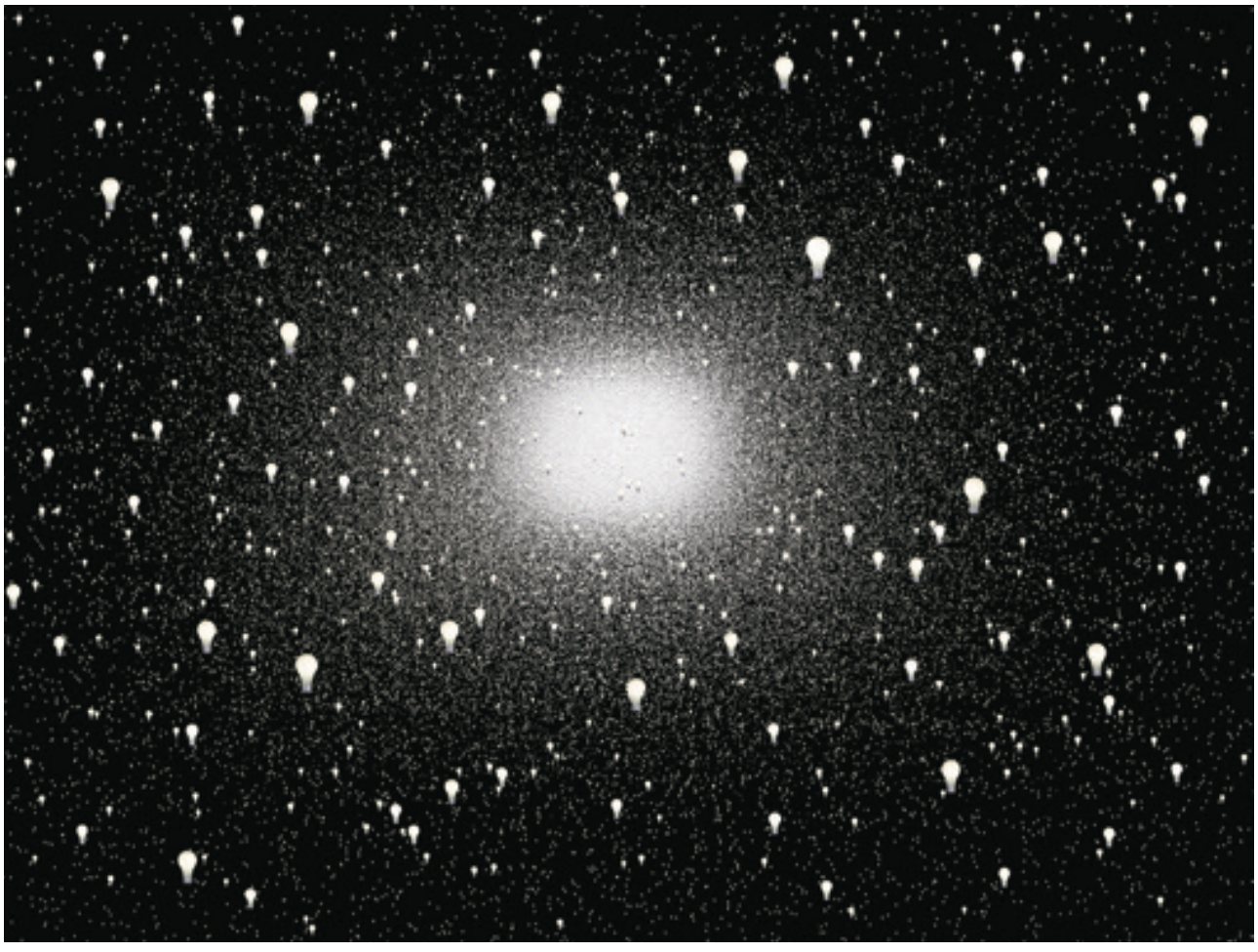
Intolerable Beauty

Portraits of American Mass Consumption

Light Bulbs, 2008, by Chris Jordan 72"x96". (with detail below) Depicts 320,000 light bulbs, equal to the number of kilowatt hours of electricity wasted in the United States every minute from inefficient residential electricity usage (inefficient wiring, computers in sleep mode, etc.). *More on pg4.*



Letters

No safe levels of radiation

In a recent press release, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission claims to be expert on the subject of "junk science." I believe it. How else could the CNSC claim there is "no risk" to health from elevated levels of radioactive materials in the environment when so many major scientific bodies say the opposite? The US National Academy of Sciences (NAS), the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP) and the UN Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) have all stressed that existing scientific evidence reveals no safe level of radiation exposure.

The CNSC knows perfectly well that atomic workers around the world have been shown to suffer from excess cancer and leukemia as a result of radiation exposures on the job. Moreover, Canadian atomic workers have shown a much higher excess of radiation-caused leukemias than atomic workers in other countries, possibly because of their exceptionally high exposure to tritium.

I have yet to see the CNSC publically correct any of the fallacious claims made routinely by the Canadian nuclear industry, yet here it is criticizing a public interest organization for daring to say that deliberate releases of radioactive carcinogens like tritium into public drinking water supplies should be stopped. In its latest press release, the CNSC has revealed itself as a defender of the industry's right to pollute rather than as a champion of the public's right to a hygienic environment.

– Gordon Edwards, Ph.D., President, Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility. www.ccnr.org.

The CNSC knows perfectly well that atomic workers around the world have been shown to suffer from excess cancer and leukemia as a result of radiation exposures on the job.

Fight for your pets' rights

You can choose to take your child to a homeopath, chiropractor or doctor of Chinese Medicine without a referral from a doctor, but you need a referral from a veterinarian to make the same choice for your pets. And many veterinarians will not refer pets to alternative health care practitioners, effectively limiting your access to these important modalities.

If you want your pet to see a homeopath or other alternative health care practitioner, you must pay for a veterinarian to supervise the visit. This added cost makes access to qualified alternative health care impossible for most pet owners. Veterinarians need only minimal training in homeopathy, chiropractics and acupuncture – often for only a few weekends – to be "qualified" to practise these modalities on your pet.

The BC government is contemplating changes to the BC Veterinarian's Act that may further limit or even eliminate your freedom to make choices regarding your pet's health care. You have the power to stop this from happening. The government of BC has requested advice from the public (by December 2, 2009) regarding proposed changes to the BC Veterinarians Act that is currently under review. There is significant concern that the changes being contemplated would provide the BCVMA with greater power to regulate itself. In recent years, the BCVMA has been involved in legal proceedings that have not served the public or their animals. The BCVMA has not acted in a manner that has instilled confidence in the public and accordingly should not be given the power to change bylaws and regulations or govern itself unchecked by the public it is supposed to be protecting.

For further information, visit www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/2009AL0016-000551.htm or contact the Strategic Policy and Legislation Branch of the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands at P.O. Box 9303, Stn. Provincial Government, Victoria, BC, V8W 9N1send the Ministry a fax at 250-387-2410.

– Marilyn Bell, Vancouver

Common Ground

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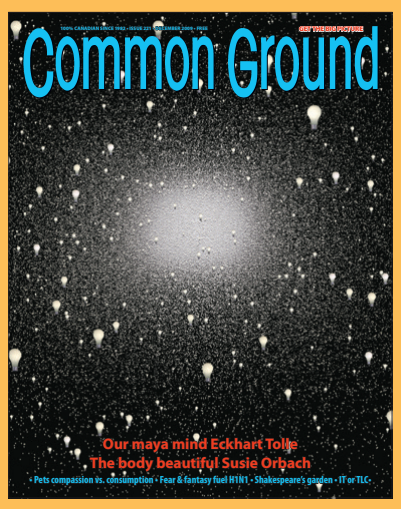
Cover image by Chris Jordan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Running the Numbers

An American self-portrait

by Chris Jordan

Running the Numbers looks at contemporary American culture through the austere lens of statistics. Each image portrays a specific quantity of something: fifteen million sheets of office paper (five minutes of paper use); 106,000 aluminum cans (thirty seconds of can consumption) and so on. My hope is that images representing these quantities might have a different effect than the raw numbers alone, such as we find daily in articles and books. Statistics can feel abstract and anesthetizing, making it difficult to connect with and make meaning of 3.6 million SUV sales in one year, for example, or 2.3 million Americans in prison, or 32,000 breast augmentation surgeries in the U.S. every month.

This project visually examines these vast and bizarre measures of our society, in large, intricately detailed prints assembled from thousands of smaller photographs. Employing themes such as the near versus the far, and the one versus the many, I hope to raise some questions about the roles and responsibilities we each play as individuals in a collective that is increasingly enormous, incomprehensible, and overwhelming.

– Seattle, 2008

Running the Numbers II
Portraits of global mass culture

This new series looks at mass phenomena that occur on a global scale. Similarly to the first *Running the Numbers* series, each image portrays a specific quantity of something: the number of tuna fished from the world's oceans every fifteen minutes, for example. But this time the statistics are global in scale, rather than specifically American.

Finding meaning in global mass phenomena can be difficult because the phenomena themselves are invisible, spread across the earth in millions of separate places. There is no Mount Everest of waste that we can make a pilgrimage to and behold the sobering aggregate of our discarded stuff, seeing and feeling it viscerally with our senses.

Instead, we are stuck with trying to comprehend the gravity of these phenomena through the anaesthetizing and emotionally barren language of statistics. Sociologists tell us that the human mind cannot meaningfully grasp numbers higher than a few thousand; yet every day we read of mass phenomena characterized by numbers in the millions, billions, even trillions. *continued p.31...*

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Shaping the body

The crisis in our closest **relationship**

by Susie Orbach

EVERY DAY, my inbox, like most people's, fills with invitations to enlarge the size of my penis or my breasts, to purchase the pleasure and potency booster Viagra and to try the latest herbal or pharmaceutical preparation to lose weight. The exhortations have fooled the spam filter and the popular science pages, which too sing of implants and pills to augment body or brain and new methods of reproduction, which bypass conventional biology.

Meanwhile, young girls can go on the Miss Bimbo website to create a virtual doll, keep it "waif" thin with diet pills and buy it breast implants and facelifts. They are being primed to be teenagers who will dream of new thighs, noses or breasts as they peruse magazines, which display page after page of a look that only 10 years ago still had the power to evoke horror in us as we recoiled at skeletal models reminiscent of famine victims. Simultaneously, government pronouncements grimly warn of an epidemic of obesity. Your body, all these phenomena shout, is your canvas to be fixed, remade and enhanced. Join in. Enjoy. Be part of it.

As a practising psychotherapist and psychoanalyst, I see the impact of calls for bodily transformations, enhancements and "perfectibility" in the consulting room. People do not necessarily come in with particular body troubles, but whatever their other emotional predicaments and conflicts, concern for the body is nearly always folded into them, as though it were perfectly commonplace to be telling a story in which body dissatisfaction is central. Like many of us, the people I work with wish to and do reshape their bodies in both small and dramatic ways. They find fault with their bodies and say it makes them feel better, more in control, to improve them. Like most of us, they do not like to believe that they are being unduly influenced by outside pressures and may disdain such an idea, with its crude sense of manipulation.

Whether followers of fashion or health trends or not, we take for granted that looking good for ourselves will make us feel good. And yet there is a subtle tracery of outside urgings, which works on us, creating a new and often dissatisfied relationship with our bodies. The sense that biology need no longer be destiny is gaining ground and so it follows that where there is a (perceived) body problem, a body solution can be found. A belief in both the perfectible body and the notion that we should relish or at least accede to improving our own body has not, however, solved the problem. On the contrary, it has exaggerated the problem and contributed to what we observe today – a progressively unstable body, a body, which, to an alarming degree, is becoming a site of serious suffering and disorder.

Our bodies are increasingly being experienced as objects to be honed and worked on. Men are targeted with steroids, sexual aids and specific masculine-oriented diet products. Children's bodies, too. Photographers now offer digitally enhanced baby and child photos – correcting smiles, putting in or removing gaps between the teeth, straightening out wobbly knees, turning little girls into facsimiles of china dolls. The web addresses of these conjurors show no sense of irony since they believe that enhancing photos is a version of natural beauty, the real thing. Girlie-sexy culture now entrances more rather than fewer of us. Putting the body on show and making it appear "attractive" are presented as fun, desirable and easily accessible.

Girls as young as four have been made bodily self-conscious and are striking sexy poses in their mirrors, which are more chilling than charming, while greater numbers of women in old-age homes are showing signs of long-term eating disorders.

Body beautiful and the goal of perfectibility have been democratized, invitingly set out as available to everyone in any country whatever their economic situation; the right body is trumpeted as a way of belonging in our world today. This democratic call for beauty disconcertingly wears an increasingly homogenized and homogenizing form, with the images and names of the global style icons pressed on the lips and the eyes of the young and the not so young. While

some people may be able to opt in and do so joyfully, a larger number cannot. For the democratic idea has not extended to aesthetic variation; instead the aesthetic has paradoxically become narrower over the last few decades. The slim aesthetic – with pecs for men and ample breasts for women – bedevils those who don't conform, and even those who do happen to fit can carry a sorrowful insecurity about their own bodies.

A constant fretfulness and vigilance take hold for many from the moment they wake until the time they fall asleep. Their bodies are on high alert. The norm has become to worry. In another time, we would have called such anxieties an illness and seeing how many suffer, we would have called it an epidemic. But we don't. We have become so implicated in variants of body preoccupation ourselves, and girls and women in particular so colonised by it, that the preoccupation has become second natured – almost "natural" and invisible.

If, however, we do look, we see that the preoccupation with the body is disturbing in its capacity to affect almost an entire life, from childhood through to old age. Young boys' yearnings to emulate a great sportsman's agility are now focused on the desire for the look of a six-pack. Girls as young as four have been made bodily self-conscious and are striking sexy poses in their mirrors, which are more chilling than charming, while greater numbers of women in old-age homes are showing signs of long-term eating disorders. Few would say that such concerns come only from outside pressures. We experience the wish for more perfect bodies as our own desire, as indeed it is, yet it is hard to separate out the ways bodies are seen, talked about and written about and the effect of that on our personal perception of our own bodies and other bodies.

In essence, this kind of focus makes the body today no longer something secure or ordinary in itself. The body has become a new focus in both women's and men's lives. A new rhetoric of detox, weight training, brushing, irrigation, cleansing is proposed, inclining us to watchfulness and determination where our body is concerned. Those who had previously paid little heed to fashion or health now find themselves caught up in attempts to make the best of themselves and to take responsibility for their health and well-being. The individual is now deemed accountable for his or her body and judged by it. "Looking after oneself" is a moral value. The body is becoming akin to a worthy personal project.

Feature writers fill endless column inches with advice about how we should care for ourselves. Television programmes focus on the bonuses, the necessity and the moral superiority of paying attention to individual health and beauty. Politicians urge us to take personal responsibility. Meanwhile, our visual world is being transformed through an intensification of images, which represent the body and parts of the body in ways that artfully convey a sense that our own bodies are seriously in need of reshaping and updating. Without even noticing, we may willingly accept the invitation, eager to stay up-to-date.

The preoccupation with thinness and beauty, which has been eroding individual self-worth for years, has recently been joined by another fixation: the rising rate of obesity. An ordinary reliance on one's body to signal its dietary needs appears to have evaporated, to be replaced by scrutiny and despair as one struggles to control a body now designated as rapacious. Diet companies are growing, with a newcomer, NutriSystem hitting the *Fortune* 500 fastest growing companies as it moved from profits of $1 million in 2004 to $85 million in just two years. New gyms and health bars keep opening. New foods keep being invented. Magazines devoted to weight, shape and health expand their circulation. A relentless desire to reshape the body is evident everywhere. Cosmetic surgical procedures are occupying more of our television screens and our purses (with a growth rate of $1 billion a year), implying that resculpting is easy and an expression of self-worth. On top of all this, reproduction is being reconfigured: young women are freezing embryos for future use, having access to IVF at ever younger ages, and a new phenomenon, the transgendered man, is reproducing.

Late capitalism has catapulted us out of centuries-old bodily practices, which were centred on survival, procreation, the provision of shelter and the satisfaction of hunger. Now, birthing, illness and ageing, while part of the ordinary cycle of life, are also events that can be interrupted or altered by personal endeavour in which one harnesses the medical advances and surgical restructurings on offer. Our body is judged as our individual production. We can fashion it through artifice, through the naturalistic routes of bio-organic products or through a combination of these, but whatever the means, our body is our calling card, vested with showing the results of our hard work and watchfulness or, alternatively, our failure and sloth.

Where once the body of the manual worker could be easily identified through brawn and muscle, now it is the middle-class body that must show evidence of being worked on at the gym, through yoga or any number of body practices, which aim to display what the individual has achieved through diligent exercise. For young people, it is very much a case of take care or beware. Users of social networking sites often post unflattering pictures of individuals, which are then "snarked" and negatively commented on. The rise of public bitching about the body is accompanied by the dissemination of images throughout the World Wide Web.

Commercial pressures delivered today by celebrity culture, branding and industries, which make their profits by destabilizing the late-modern body, have eradicated most of our prior feeling towards and understanding of the body. Our bodies no longer make things. In the West, robotics, mechanized farm equipment, pre-prepared goods from food to building packs, motorised transport, high-tech warfare and so on have replaced much ordinary physical activity and labour. We don't tend to repair things either, for mass production means it is cheaper to replace them. Our relations to the physical and physical work are shifting. Where working-class bodies were shaped by the musculature of heavy physical work, low-paid jobs in the service industry and computer-based jobs across the class spectrum leave no such physical indicators. Indeed, many of us have to make an effort to move about during the day or as we work.

In an updating and democratizing of the habit of the leisured classes (who didn't do physical labour) of decorating themselves as amusement and social marker, we are invited to take up this activity too. Thus, we can observe something new occurring. Our bodies are and have become a form of work. The body is turning from being the means of production to the production itself.

Excerpted from Bodies *by Susie Orbach. Copyright © 2009 Picador. All rights reserved. Susie Orbach is a psychotherapist and co-founder of the Women's Therapy Center in London and New York and a consultant and co-originator of the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty.*

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IT vs TLC

Electronic medical records? Try listening first

by Marc Ringel, MD

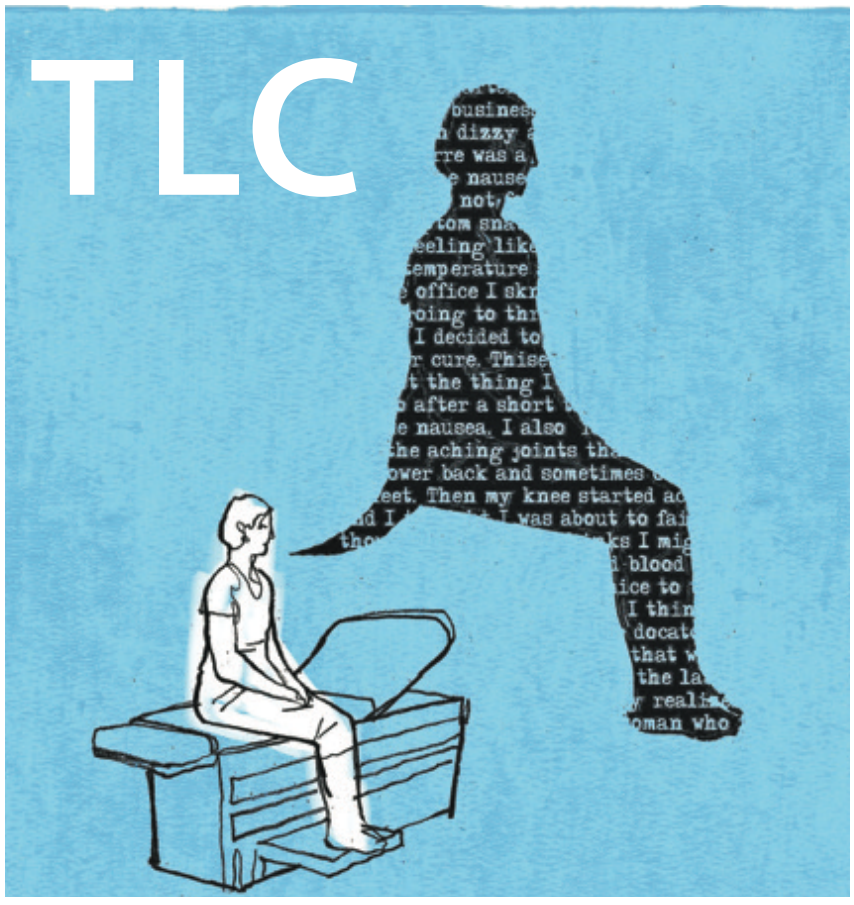

illustration by Steve Sedam

AS FAR BACK as you look, the history of science is rife with puzzlement over the relationship between mind, spirit, consciousness, and experience on one side, and body on the other. How to reconcile the subjectivity of human life with the objectivity of science continues to be a central issue of post-modern life, especially when it comes to healthcare.

The objective scientific point of view, with its emphasis on the body, got its biggest boost in American medicine when the Flexner Report on medical education was published by the Carnegie Foundation in 1910. This book-length bulletin led to codification in the U.S. of the German graduate medical education model, with a heavy emphasis on teaching by scientific researchers, in the classroom and at the bedside.

Despite modern attempts to broaden the curriculum and the doctor's mind, nearly a hundred years after Flexner the hegemony of research-based science has remained virtually unchallenged in medical training. Still, the personal, unquantifiable experience of health and illness stubbornly insinuates itself into the world of the physician, sometimes in the most unlikely of places, like the radiology reading room. I'd like to tell you about an amazing study, undertaken by Dr. Yehonatan Turner, a radiology resident at Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem. He reported his findings at last December's meeting of the Radiological Society of North America.

For the purposes of his investigation, Turner attached a photo portrait to the CT-scans of some patients. He found that the interpretations of those scans that also displayed an image of the patient's face were consistently more thorough than the interpretations of the scans without photos.

In general, the specialty of radiology attracts people who cluster toward the data-driven end of the spectrum that runs from touchy-feely to analytical. These are doctors who have chosen to spend the bulk of their professional time with images, instead of with flesh-and-blood patients. At work, radiologists mostly inhabit darkened rooms with multiple, high-definition computer monitors, a dictation gizmo, and little else. They strive to be as objective and thorough as they can. And still, having an image of the patient's face appears to help the coolly dispassionate radiologist to do a better job.

I had this study in mind when a non-physician colleague asked me what I think about the electronic medical record (EMR). Given that the federal stimulus package includes $18 billion for development and installation of EMRs throughout the healthcare system, this is all of a sudden a more urgent question than it used to be.

Over the years I've been a huge proponent of harnessing information technology in service of better healthcare, having even published a couple of books about it. What we expect of the modern doctor has long been impossible without an automated system for keeping track of all the things – from drug interactions to the attributes of uncommon diseases – that ought to be at every clinician's fingertips for every patient encounter. Yet, neither I, nor the vast majority of my colleagues, have anything like the information system we really need to provide the absolutely best care, based on the best scientific evidence, to every one of our patients at the time we see them.

I have railed for decades at the average doctor's lack of immediate access to critically important, well-organized information. So, I surprised myself with my answer to my friend's query about the EMR. I opined that the electronic medical record is not yet ready for universal roll-out.

First, the problem of standards must be solved so most electronic medical information systems can talk to each other. Even an institution that brags of having the best, most comprehensive EMR will be missing a large chunk of data that reside in other institutions' computers, necessarily presenting a dangerously incomplete picture of many patients. A significant share of the $18 billion is supposed to go toward developing, disseminating and enforcing standardized ways for medical information machines to communicate with each other, which ought to help.

There is a deeper problem that makes the EMR still unready for universal application. By interposing a computer monitor between patient and doctor, so much may be lost if the result is to reduce the conversation to filling in an electronic template so as to generate quantifiable, codifiable, digital data. However badly medical training may have damaged our ability to listen, most of us doctors still do elicit and use our patients' stories. We mine these tales for data. We also depend on conversation to develop the all-important therapeutic relationship, based on mutual understanding and trust.

Human stories are told in idiosyncratic natural language, which no computer program has yet come close to 'understanding' well enough to reliably turn narrative into data, let alone to support a human relationship. An EMR risks losing the story, the understanding, and the relationship when it leads doctors to use a checklist to find out what's really bothering a patient instead of asking a few open-ended questions.

Eventually, the puzzle of EMR standards, as well as other technical issues like usability and efficiency, will be solved. It will take leadership, organization, time and money. However, nobody has a clue yet about how to fix the deeper problem of story versus data. There is no "killer app" on the horizon that will do justice to both subjective and objective.

I plan to write another book one of these days about information technology and medicine. That volume will be as much about what electronic systems cannot do as what they can. The central theme will be to examine how to employ these wonderful gizmos to do the rote things that they do best so as to free health professionals to do what we do best, which is to be healers.

Patients' stories and their faces will always be crucial data to a healer. I expect it will be a long, long time before a machine can extract real meaning from a patient's illness narrative, let alone appreciate what there is to learn from a picture of her face.

Human stories are told in idiosyncratic natural language, which no computer program has yet come close to 'understanding' well enough... An EMR risks losing the story, the understanding, and the relationship when it leads doctors to use a checklist to find out what's really bothering a patient instead of asking a few open-ended questions.

Marc Ringel has spent the majority of his career as a family doctor working in rural communities, including the last 12 years in Brush, Colorado. He has written extensively, for lay and professional audiences, about rural health, medical informatics and healing.

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H1N1 pandemic or panic?

Dr. Tom Jefferson's research is a powerful antidote to rampant bio-evangelism

DRUG BUST *Alan Cassels*

The amount of death and disease would be less if all disease were left to itself. – (1835) Dr. Jacob Bigelow, prominent US physician and botanist

HE SHOULD be one of the most famous people on the planet right now, lauded for his research and a consultant for the most powerful health policy makers and planners in the world. The immense clarity he has brought to what we know about vaccines and influenza could even launch him as a candidate for the Nobel Prize in Medicine. Yet Dr. Tom Jefferson, a British physician who works out of an office in Rome, lives largely in anonymity and despite the resonance his name might have in relation to the famous American who authored the *Declaration of Independence*, this Tom Jefferson is hardly a household name.

This is odd, given that, as we close a year which will be remembered as 'The Year of the Damn Panic' – I mean pandemic – his research would have helped stifle the fear mongers and wind back the influenza panic currently holding the world hostage. Dr. Jefferson is a member of the Cochrane Collaboration's Acute Respiratory Infections Group, a group of researchers, epidemiologists and clinical experts who pour through the world's evidence around influenza and respiratory infections. His group has published dozens of meta-analyses, essentially critical summaries of studies based on the world's body of scientific evidence around the treatment of flu and flu-like illnesses, synthesizing it, and telling us what we can and cannot say with certainty about the effectiveness and safety of flu vaccines. (Check out the online resources at www.cochrane.org/influenza/)

Dr. Jefferson's research brings some clear-headedness to the flaming bio-evangelism that has been swirling the planet since June when the World Health Organization declared the world was in the midst of an influenza pandemic. This WHO declaration, who some claim to be fraudulent as it was largely derived from a redefinition of the word 'pandemic,' sent national governments around the world scrambling in a frenzy of vaccine and antiviral drug stockpiling, creating pandemic preparedness plans and stoking the world's media to print headlines announcing SOMETHING BIG was afoot.

Preparing the public to face a virus of unknown, but potentially huge, lethality evoked the spectre of the 1919 Spanish flu and heightened anxiety among public health officials who carried out a lot of hand wringing (and hand washing) about what to do.

With such high stakes, did the world's national governments seek out the best evidence surrounding flu treatments and consult with the world's best and most knowledgeable assessors of that evidence? After all, given our deep belief that clinical medicine (and health policy) is based on a foundation of scientific research, you might have assumed, as I did, that poring through the evidence around influenza preventative interventions would have been the highest priority in this year of the pandemic. Wouldn't you?

Yet you'd be wrong.

In their scurrying to rush vaccines to market and otherwise construct a large-scale, multibillion dollar public health exercise, there was only one thing the public health experts forgot to do: to look at the evidence around the flu vaccines and the antiviral drugs they were so keen to promote. If they'd taken the time to understand the work of Dr. Tom Jefferson and his colleagues at Cochrane, they would have understood the evidence was on Mars and the prevailing recommendations around mass vaccinations for the flu were on Venus.

When I called him at his office in Rome, Tom Jefferson was just finishing off a review on the evidence around hand washing, which was commissioned by several national governments. He's a busy man lately, revising and updating reviews and trying to avoid some of the weirdness that might come with being a researcher in an area of such global importance. He tells me about recently turning down an offer to appear on a talk show on US television, saying "I do reviews; I'm not exactly a ballerina."

The current pandemic craziness that has much of the globe in its embrace clearly mystifies and engages him. He framed our discussion by referring me to a recent review he'd written for the *British Medical Journal* of Philip Alcabes' book, *Dread: How Fear and Fantasy Have Fueled Epidemics From the Black Death to the Avian Flu.* In his review, he poses a particularly pertinent question: "Why and how had a relatively benign disease such as influenza been turned into a fund-raising, raging monster at our door? Why had poorly performing vaccines and flopped antiflu drugs been turned into money spinners and career builders by governments?"

It's what I was about to ask him.

Dr. Jefferson points to a central, simplistic equation that is used to fuel pandemics, drive research agendas and suck public health agencies into action: "One germ equals one disease equals one solution (pill or vaccine)." In his opinion, things aren't that simple and from our wide-ranging discussion, I have tried to synthesize some of the key soundbites and conclusions I was left with:

If you get flu symptoms, you don't necessarily have 'THE' flu.

He tells me it's necessary to distinguish between those viruses that we can immunize against – influenza A and B) – from perhaps up to 200 other known viruses and many unknowns that circulate. All these viruses can cause similar symptoms, what the researchers call "Influenza-Like Illness" (ILI.) and the vast majority have no vaccines or proven preventative treatments. Dr. Jefferson reminds me that, through systematic reviews, his group has found that influenza is actually a relatively rare disease. Of 100 people in the population in the wintertime, approximately between seven and 10 will experience flu symptoms yet only one will actually have one of the influenza viruses A or B. So what we're talking about here is vaccinating for a 'disease' that may afflict one percent of the population over the two to three months of its maximum circulation.

For whom is the flu vaccine effective?

Generally, looking at the published research, flu vaccines aren't that effective. There is no evidence they're effective for children under two, yet they can help prevent symptoms in older children and healthy adults; they hasten return to work by half a day, on average. There is poor evidence that the vaccines work in people with chronic conditions or that they prevent death in the elderly. There is no credible evidence that they prevent complications from bronchitis and pneumonia in all age groups and there is little evidence that they are safe to take in pregnancy. That, of course, is different from saying they cause harms as there is little hard evidence of that either. The fact that the vaccines appear to prevent what is called "all-cause mortality" may be an artifact of how they are studied and reflect research that is based on comparing the health of people who get vaccinated versus the health of those who don't, which we call the healthy user effect. Basically, flu vaccines are shown to be more effective in people who already appear to be quite healthy.

What about antivirals like amantadine, rimantadine or oseltamivir (Tamiflu)?

The first two are relatively bad drugs; they won't interrupt transmission and don't prevent infection. Newer drugs like Tamiflu have fewer harms and are more effective in alleviating symptoms and reducing the length of symptoms even as there is increasing evidence that they may be linked to harms, especially psychiatric harms.

What about non-drug or non-vaccine approaches?

Some non virus-specific interventions work best and the bonus is that they can work for all viruses, not just the ones for which you can vaccinate. These include good personal hygiene, distancing, hand washing or wearing gloves and gowns, which is probably impractical for the average person. The highest quality evidence suggests that the spread of respiratory viruses can be prevented by hygienic measures around younger children – more hand washing.

What about flu vaccine safety?

As Dr. Jefferson has said, "New vaccines never behave in the way you expect them to." It may be that there is a link to GBS (Guillain-Barré syndrome), a nervous system disorder that can cause paralysis, but it could end up being anything because some of the new additives have not been studied sufficiently or the data are inaccessible.

At the end of the day, Dr. Jefferson agrees that the story is fascinating and very complex. I told him I was surprised about the poor quality of the evidence given the billions being spent on vaccines alone for this pandemic and he reminded me that the quality of policy-making seemed even worse. He pointed to a piece he published in the *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, which clearly lays out how poorly government influenza recommendations seem to adhere to the available evidence.

Having seen the poor quality of the evidence, Dr. Jefferson argues that flu shots need to be subjected to more rigorous testing so we can ensure that vaccine programs are successful at lowering rates of flu cases and deaths. There seems to be a Grand Canyon-sized gap between what we know and what has been recommended during this 'Year of the Pandemic' and this does nothing to instil public confidence in those who have been charged with keeping the public safe.

In their scurrying to rush vaccines to market and otherwise construct a large-scale, multibillion dollar public health exercise, there was only one thing the public health experts forgot to do: to look at the evidence around the flu vaccines and the antiviral drugs they were so keen to promote.

Alan Cassels is a drug policy researcher at the University of Victoria. He has maintained that on the day his local health authority announces it will vaccinate the public as part of a randomized controlled trial, he will roll up his sleeve: As he claims, "If they randomize, I'll immunize."

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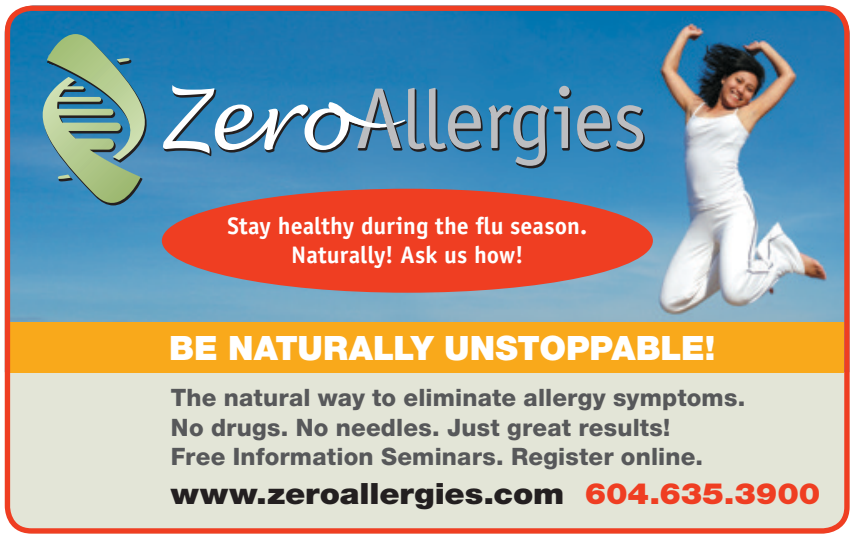
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NUTRISPEAK Vesanto Melina MS, RD

CHANGING YOUR diet can be as effective in reducing emissions of climate-changing gases as changing (or eliminating) the car you drive, installing a geothermal heating system or doing away with the clothes dryer. In fact, according to the Worldwatch Institute and the World Health Organization, our dietary choices have significantly more impact. Support for a more vegetarian way of eating also comes from former chief economist of the World Bank and *Stern Review* author Nicholas Stern, who will be in attendance at the UN meeting on climate change in Copenhagen from December 7 to 18. Sweden has become a leader by introducing grocery and restaurant labels that list the carbon dioxide emissions associated with the production of the foods one chooses.

Whether you go veggie one day a week or seven, you can nourish and warm yourself by making a lesser impact on the planet. The following recipes are from *Raising Vegetarian Children* by Jo Stepaniak and Vesanto Melina (McGraw-Hill).

Warm red cider

Makes 3 3/4 cups

This aromatic drink is welcome after an afternoon outdoors. If you prefer, replace the cinnamon sticks and whole cloves with 1/4 teaspoon of ground cinnamon and a pinch of ground cloves. As cranberry cocktail is usually sweetened with sugar, you may wish to replace both juices with a sugar-free apple-cranberry-grape juice blend.

2 cups apple juice
2 cups cranberry cocktail
2 sticks cinnamon
5 whole cloves

In saucepan, combine juices, cinnamon and cloves. Bring just to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Serve warm.

Cheez-A-Roni

Makes about 8 cups

Pasta in a creamy, cheesy-tasting sauce, with or without tomatoes, is a favourite with young and old. This delicious meal is dairy-free, low in fat and high in protein, vitamins and minerals. For a wheat-free and gluten-free version, use rice or corn pasta instead of wheat macaroni. Nutritional yeast flakes are available from natural foods stores and help give a cheesy flavour. (They taste quite different from other types of yeast.) As this dish cools, or if leftovers are refrigerated, the macaroni will absorb moisture from the sauce. To make the mixture more saucy, add a little water or tomato juice when you reheat it.

2 tablespoons olive, safflower or other vegetable oil
1 very large onion, finely chopped
1 teaspoon crushed garlic
28-ounce can diced tomatoes, undrained
2 cups Gee Whiz Cheez (recipe below)
2 to 3 tablespoons nutritional yeast flakes
1 teaspoon salt, or to taste
1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon pepper
Large pinch cayenne pepper (optional)
3 cups (12 ounces) dry macaroni or other tube pasta (such as penne)

Heat the oil in a very large saucepan over medium-high heat. When hot, add onion and sauté until tender and medium brown to give the onion a lovely caramelized taste. Adjust the heat as necessary so that the onion doesn't burn. Stir in garlic and cook for 1 minute longer. Add tomatoes and stir. Then stir in the prepared Gee Whiz Spread, nutritional yeast flakes, salt, pepper and cayenne (if using) and mix well. Simmer gently, stirring often, to warm through. Meanwhile, cook pasta according to package directions. Drain well. Stir hot pasta into simmering sauce and combine gently but thoroughly. Serve.

Gee Whiz Cheez

Makes 2 cups

2 cups cooked or canned (15-ounce can) white beans, drained
1/3 cup nutritional yeast flakes
1/4 cup fresh, bottled or frozen lemon juice
3 tablespoons tahini or cashew butter
3/4 teaspoon paprika
1/2 teaspoon prepared yellow mustard
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon onion or garlic powder (optional)

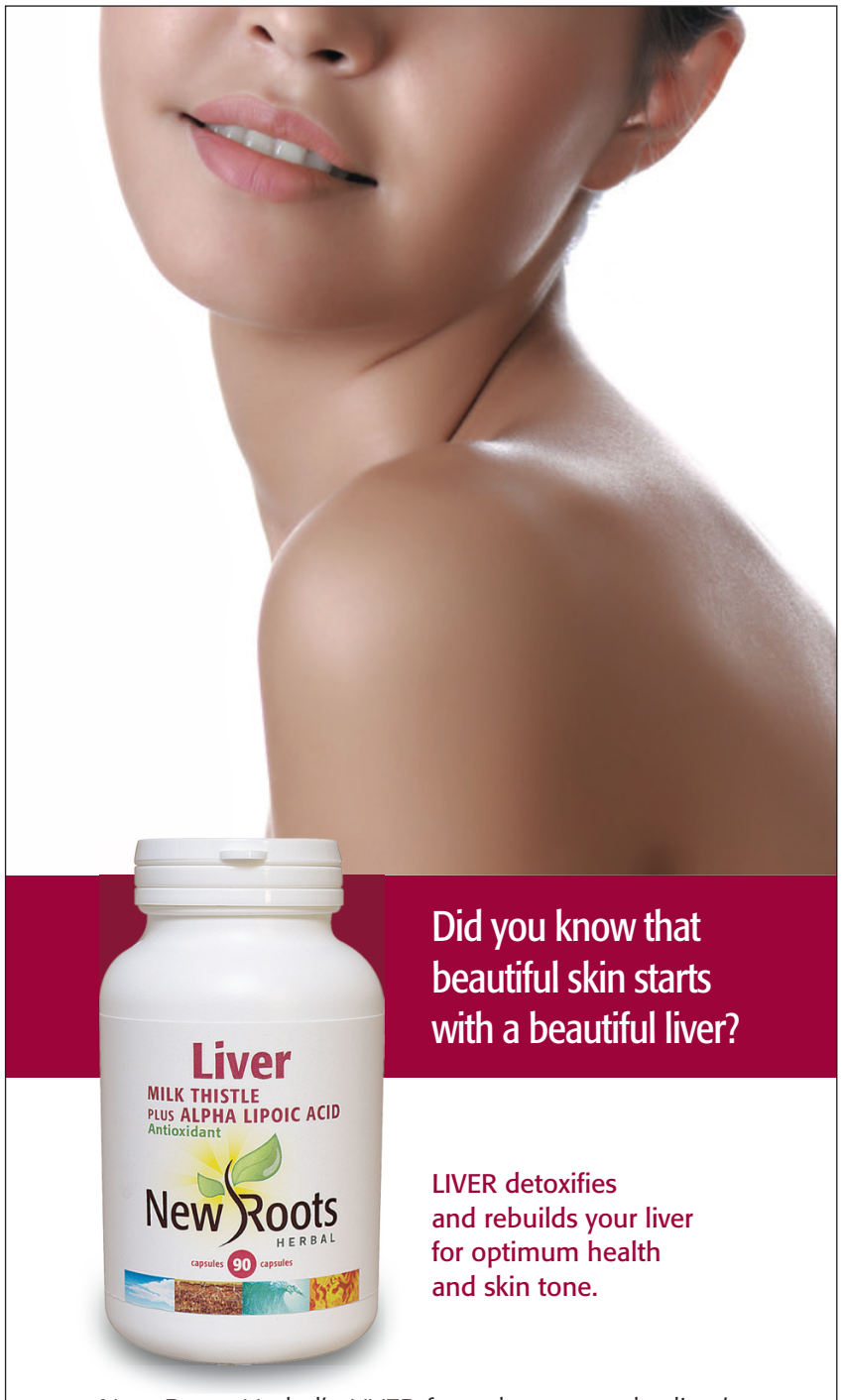
Place all ingredients in a food processor and process until completely smooth. Note: this Cheez also may be used separately as a dip or as a spread in sandwiches.

Per cup: calories: 326; protein: 14 g; carbohydrate: 52 g; fat: 8 g; dietary fibre: 9 g.

Resources

Times Online: http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/environment/article6891362.ece
New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/23/world/europe/23degrees.html?_r=2&emc=eta1

The following food and nutrition classics, co-authored by local dietitian Vesanto Melina, make excellent gifts: Becoming Vegetarian, Becoming Vegan, Raising Vegetarian Children, the Food Allergy Survival Guide *and the* Raw Food Revolution Diet. *For consultations, phone 604-882-6782. www.nutrispeak.com*



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Pet connections

phot montage: P. Baranovsky

Finding the balance between compassion and consumption, pets and plate

by Geoff Olson

THE LATE American writer Kurt Vonnegut once said his greatest joy in life was rolling around with his dog in the grass. We can only imagine what Vonnegut, who lamented his species' ecologically suicidal behaviour, would have thought about a recent study claiming that dogs have larger ecological footprints than an SUV. In *Time to Eat the Dog? The Real Guide to Sustainable Living*, authors Robert and Brenda Vale argue that resources required to feed a dog, including the area of land required to produce its food, translates into twice the eco-footprint of, say, building and fuelling a Toyota Land Cruiser. And there's no reason for cat owners to feel smug. It turns out a feline's eco-footprint is about as great as building and fuelling a Volkswagen Golf.

Eco-estimates like this have become the middle-class equivalents of medieval hair shirts and knotted whips. Imagine how much it would take to convince people to stop having pets, much less eat them, as suggested by the Vale's book title. By this argument's logic, chowing down on Prince and Snowball would only be a start. You and I and all the other 'useless eaters' would need to take a pledge to exit the planet early, to reduce our footprints to a dimensionless point. James Lovelock's Gaia is a vengeful God, after all.

I've always found pet people, the ones with a slightly unhinged enthusiasm for their furry dependents, a bit suspect. Yet a large part of the doggy daycare culture, with its organic biscuits and fashionable accoutrements, is the displaced nurturing behaviour of people without kids. What if we took to measuring the eco-footprint of raising children in the First World? I wouldn't be surprised if raising one kid, from infancy to young adulthood, was the equivalent eco-footprint of a factory floor of Hummers.

I have no children, but I do have a dog and cat. My wife and I discovered Mica in a shelter a year ago, shivering behind wire mesh. A rescue dog from the Kootenays, she was a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an animal shelter – part Black Lab and God knows what else. Possibly Border Collie and maybe some Rottweiler – and if her speed is any indication, a trace of cruise missile.

I'm fully aware of the irony of being one-half of a vegan/vegetarian couple that owns a 60-pound carnivore. In my defence, this dog-owning lifestyle snuck up on me. I had spent most of my adult life petless, killing a succession of houseplants through neglect. In contrast, my wife had never been without an animal. When we met, her two elderly dogs were preparing to shuffle off the canine coil (kindly freeing the planet from their dastardly ecological pawprint). So when they passed on, we both decided it was time to rebuild her furry fan base.

Over the centuries, human beings have bred dogs for size, stamina, speed, hunting, tracking and herding. No matter which obscure character or kink we selected for, the wilderness remained close to their hearts. Look into a dog's eyes and there's an ancient connection going back to the Neolithic era, when wolves shadowed the campfires of our ancestors. Two species entered into an unspoken arrangement: one would patrol the perimeter of the camps while the other left scraps in return. Their orbit grew closer and closer and over time the domesticated wolf was spun by artificial selection into dozens of shapes and sizes. The soft clay of *Canis lupus* was moulded into terriers, hounds, baiters and racing dogs. Today, some breeds look comic, and some just plain scary – from the rat-sized arm candy of rich socialites to the rippled hellhounds of heavily tattooed owners.

Our relationship with other living creatures has been fraught with paradox from the very beginning. Primitive, hunting-gathering people were caught in an existential bind, according to the late American mythologist Joseph Campbell. They regarded wild animals as Gods, but how can you kill a God for its flesh? Campbell believed an entire body of myth and ritual arose to reconcile this thorny situation. Before or after the hunt, animals were thanked for participating in their own death, a ritual that persists today among the globe's last remaining pockets of hunter-gatherers.

As our hunting partners, dogs became the intermediaries between the spirits of the wild and human culture. In the stories we told, the guardians to the Otherworld were often canine. In Ancient Greek mythology, the three-headed Cerberus guards the gates of Hades. In Eskimo shamanism, a dog with bared teeth guards the entrance to the undersea land of Takakapsaluk, Mother of the Sea Beasts. Dogs are 'psychopomps,' greeters and guardians at the boundaries of worlds.

Sophisticated, scientific sorts like you and me are a long way from the Paleolithic past, the shaggy dog tales of mythic literature and even our childhood imaginations. ("In a curious parallel with cave art, young children, ages three to seven, dream not about humans or family members, but about animals and animal life," observes author Morris Berman in his 1989 book *Coming to Our Senses*.) We have poor reception to the Otherworld, but the signal can be improved by having a pet. Domesticated animals help one to retain a connection, however frayed, with the spontaneous, sensory, side of animal life. They help reconnect the alienated ape to the garden within, and with a regimen of daily walks, the garden without.

At the close of Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus returns home after many years of adventures, and discovers that only his dog Argos still recognizes him. Writing of this long awaited reunion, anthropologist Loren Eiseley writes, "The magic that gleams an instant between Argos and Odysseus is both the recognition of diversity and the need for affection across the illusions of form. It is nature's cry to homeless, far-wandering, insatiable man: 'Do not forget your brethren, nor the green wood from which you sprang. To do so is to invite disaster.'"

Scientists are quick to caution us about the intellectual error of anthropomorphism, the habit of projecting human qualities on to animals. But for their part, hard-core rationalists are often blind to the possibilities of "intersubjectivity," the sharing of subjective states by two or more beings. This is not limited to people and their pets, however. Every time you open an email about a crow taking care of a kitten, a deer cuddling with a koala, or a dog and elephant that are inseparable buddies, you're witnessing one of nature's most playful routines, which momentarily undercuts the "illusion of form" through a spontaneous display of affection. And why not? When mammals aren't hungry or fearful, most of them have nothing better to do than cuddle, carouse and connect with whatever is around. We do it ourselves, every time we bend down to pat a strange dog.

Intersubjectivity is a powerful thing. In his 1969 essay *The Innocent Fox*, Eiseley recalls sitting against an upturned boat on the beach when he saw "two small projecting ears lit by the morning sun… I crept on my knees around the prow and crouched beside him. It was a small fox pup from a den under the timbers who looked up at me. The ears moved at every sound, drank in a gull's cry and the far hom of a ship. They crinkled, I began to realize, only with curiosity; they had not learned to fear. The creature was very young. He was alone in a dread universe. God knows what had become of his brothers and sisters. His parent must not have been home from hunting.

"It was not a time for human dignity,"

the author decided. "Gravely I arranged my forepaws while the puppy whimpered with ill-concealed excitement. I drew the breath of a fox's den into my nostrils. On impulse, I picked up clumsily a white bone and shook it in my teeth that had not entirely forgotten their original purpose. Round and round we tumbled for one ecstatic moment . . ."

Some of the most important moments in life can't be translated into scientific language. Eiseley closes his encounter with the baby fox with this observation: "It is the most meaningful act I shall ever accomplish, but, as Thoreau once remarked of some peculiar errand of his own, there is no use reporting it to the Royal Society." Kurt Vonnegut, who had some familiarity with rolling around with furry creatures, would have nodded in agreement.

Sometimes, it takes an animal to tear us open, and rip apart the mental categories that preserve our cherished notions of separation. The extraordinary 2004 film *Peaceable Kingdom* testifies to the buried trauma of farm workers that became involved in the killing of animals as children. Killing and butchering farm animals was a "discipline like anything else," notes farmer Harold Brown, possible only because you "keep a certain amount of discipline emotionally… I didn't break through that conditioning until I came to Farm Sanctuary."

After listening to a talk at Farm Sanctuary, an American animal protection organization, Brown decided to "adopt" a cow. Why, his wife asked, did he want to adopt the biggest most expensive farm animal of all? He wasn't sure, but he had made his decision, signing up for a cow named Snickers and its foal Rosie. A year afterwards, Brown returned to Farm Sanctuary.

"That's when it happened. All the cows were up in the barn and Snickers was in a far corner. It's been about year since she's seen me. So I walked about halfway to her and I looked at her and I said," Snickers" and put out my arms… She ran over to me, as much as a cow can run and puts her head right in my chest. She just thumps me right in the chest with her forehead. She just stands there leaning against me, and I wrapped my arms around her neck."

Brown struggles to keep his composure as he tells the rest of the story. "She kind of opened me up to that part of me that had been closed off… because after she thumped me in the chest, it was like she hit me right in the heart. And I knew right then that's exactly what I had shut off ever since I was a kid. I had this image in my head. The image was of a big light switch, and that light switch had been off and when she bumped me in the chest and just stayed there, I realized that I had developed the capacity as a kid to either turn it on or off. I could turn it on for my dog. I could turn it on for people, in my circle of compassion. And now I realized why I had to adopt a cow. How providence or whatever would have Snickers be the lesson giver… that's when my life turned around, big time."

We comfort ourselves in our schizoid treatment of animals by making a binary distinction of food and not-food. Yet, today, the world of domesticated animals mirrors the world of domesticated humans. Multimillion-dollar condos tower above the heaps of human refuse in our city streets, just as pet boutiques, pet hotel packages and doggie daycares coexist with factory farms, laboratory cages and puppy mills. We've created a heaven and hell for domesticated animals that reflects the human divides of privilege and privation.

A rethink of our relationship with other living things is ecologically vital, as long as it isn't limited to white liberal guilt about our pet's eco-pawprints. Very few of us will seriously entertain the notion of eating pets, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't be thinking about how much factory-farmed meat and rendered animal remains goes into Prince's dish. We don't need any more New Age vision questers trying to crowbar their ways into the Otherworld through chanting and drumming. We need everyday people understanding which energy flows are sustainable in our overstressed biosphere, and which are not.

A recent UBC study found that 36 percent of the world's total fisheries' catch each year is ground up into fish meal and oil to feed chicken, pigs and other farm animals. "Meanwhile, 25 percent of infants in Peru, which produces half of the world's fish meal using anchovies, are malnourished," said UBC fisheries researcher and study co-author Daniel Pauly. Lead author Jennifer Jacquet added, "Global fisheries consume 13 billion gallons of fuel each year just to catch and land fish. That's more gas than 22 million cars would use."

There are more creatures trapped in the black sites of the factory farming megabiz than there are human beings alive on Earth. For billions of cattle, pigs and chickens raised to live miserable, foreshortened lives under brutal conditions, this planet is a global concentration camp. And we are emptying the oceans to keep it going. It's obvious there is a direct connection between this karmic blight and our ecological state of affairs, if only in the form of factory farm runoff, razed rainforests, nitrate-poisoned coastal areas and our depleted oceans, to say nothing of the bio-backlash from antibiotics, bone meal, growth hormones and genetic engineering.

Yet there are signs that we are awakening to our dysfunctional relationship with other living beings. Last month in Parliament, federal MPs voted unanimously in favour of a private member's bill for a Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare. "The motion calls on Canada to support development of animal-welfare declarations at all relevant international organizations and forums," notes a report in *The Province*.

"The declaration will be a key to improved animal-welfare legislation worldwide and a step closer to ending animal cruelty globally," said MP Michelle Simson.

Canada did not spearhead this move; it's simply becoming part of an international moment that includes all 27 members of the European Union, as well as Tanzania, the Seychelles, Bahrain, Australia, New Zealand, India, the Philippines and Thailand. Though legally nonbinding, the initiative represents a major shift in thinking. It aims to link the entire animal-welfare movement under one strategic goal: "global recognition that animals are capable of feeling pain and suffering, and that they deserve protection."

Look into a dog's eyes and there's an ancient connection going back to the Neolithic era, when wolves shadowed the campfires of our ancestors. Two species entered into an unspoken arrangement: one would patrol the perimeter of the camps while the other left scraps in return.

"Life is no way to treat an animal," said Kurt Vonnegut in one of his last interviews. "It hurts too much." Alas, we're all part of it for as long as we're standing. The best we can do is to find something that somehow ennobles the sorry business of eating other creatures to survive. How about striving to reduce the suffering of all beings, and to find some middle ground in our relationship with them between the polar extremes of ritual worship and mass slaughter? That seems to me to be a noble undertaking.

Being a pet owner puts one in the same paradoxical position of being a parent – being responsible for another life, even though that extra life draws resources from life itself. It's one of the universe's more serious games, called 'One More Mouth to Feed.' If we're going to survive as a species, we have to learn to play this game better and smarter, with all living creatures.

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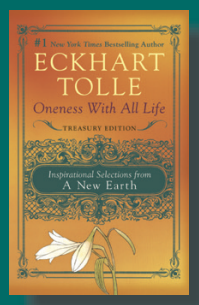
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The Metaphysics of Making Merry

The mind is Maya

Our inherited dysfunction

A NEW EARTH Eckhart Tolle

photo montage: P. Baranovsky

IF WE LOOK more deeply into humanity's ancient religions and spiritual traditions, we will find that underneath the many surface differences there are two core insights that most of them agree on. The words they use to describe those insights differ, yet they all point to a twofold fundamental truth. The first part of this truth is the realization that the "normal" state of mind of most human beings contains a strong element of what we might call dysfunction or even madness. Certain teachings at the heart of Hinduism perhaps come closest to seeing this dysfunction as a form of collective mental illness. They call it maya, the veil of delusion. Ramana Maharshi, one of the greatest Indian sages, bluntly states: "The mind is maya."

Buddhism uses different terms. According to the Buddha, the human mind in its normal state generates dukkha, which can be translated as suffering, unsatisfactoriness, or just plain misery. He sees it as a characteristic of the human condition. Wherever you go, whatever you do, says the Buddha, you will encounter dukkha, and it will manifest in every situation sooner or later.

According to Christian teachings, the normal collective state of humanity is one of "original sin." Sin is a word that has been greatly misunderstood and misinterpreted. Literally translated from the ancient Greek in which the *New Testament* was written, to sin means to miss the mark, as an archer who misses the target, so to sin means to miss the point of human existence. It means to live unskillfully, blindly, and thus to suffer and cause suffering. Again, the term, stripped of its cultural baggage and misinterpretations, points to the dysfunction inherent in the human condition.

The achievements of humanity are impressive and undeniable. We have created sublime works of music, literature, painting, architecture and sculpture. More recently, science and technology have brought about radical changes in the way we live and have enabled us to do and create things that would have been considered miraculous even 200 years ago. No doubt the human mind is highly intelligent. Yet its very intelligence is tainted by madness. Science and technology have magnified the destructive impact that the dysfunction of the human mind has upon the planet, other life-forms and upon humans themselves. That is why the history of the twentieth century is where that dysfunction, that collective insanity, can be most clearly recognized. A further factor is that this dysfunction is actually intensifying and accelerating.

The First World War broke out in 1914. Destructive and cruel wars, motivated by fear, greed and the desire for power, had been common occurrences throughout human history, as had slavery, torture and widespread violence inflicted for religious and ideological reasons. Humans suffered more at the hands of each other than through natural disasters.

By the year 1914, however, the highly intelligent human mind had invented not only the internal combustion engine, but also bombs, machine guns, submarines, flame throwers and poison gas. Intelligence in the service of madness! In static trench warfare in France and Belgium, millions of men perished to gain a few miles of mud. When the war was over in 1918, the survivors looked in horror and incomprehension upon the devastation left behind: ten million human beings killed and many more maimed or disfigured. Never before had human madness been so destructive in its effect, so clearly visible. Little did they know that this was only the beginning.

By the end of the century, the number of people who died a violent death at the hands of their fellow humans would rise to more than one hundred million. They died not only through wars between nations, but also through mass exterminations and genocide, such as the murder of twenty million "class enemies, spies, and traitors" in the Soviet Union under Stalin or the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust in Nazi Germany. They also died in countless smaller internal conflicts, such as the Spanish civil war or during the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia when a quarter of that country's population was murdered.

We only need to watch the daily news on television to realize that the madness has not abated, that it is continuing into the twenty-first century. Another aspect of the collective dysfunction of the human mind is the unprecedented violence that humans are inflicting on other life-forms and the planet itself – the destruction of oxygen-producing forests and other plant and animal life; ill-treatment of animals in factory farms; and poisoning of rivers, oceans and air. Driven by greed, ignorant of their connectedness to the whole, humans persist in behaviour that, if continued unchecked, can only result in their own destruction.

The collective manifestations of the insanity that lies at the heart of the human condition constitute the greater part of human history. It is to a large extent a history of madness. If the history of humanity were the clinical case history of a single human being, the diagnosis would have to be chronic paranoid delusions, a pathological propensity to commit murder and acts of extreme violence and cruelty against his perceived "enemies" – his own unconsciousness projected outward. Criminally insane, with a few brief lucid intervals.

Fear, greed and the desire for power are the psychological motivating forces not only behind warfare and violence between nations, tribes, religions and ideologies, but also the cause of incessant conflict in personal relationships. They bring about a distortion in your perception of other people and yourself. Through them, you misinterpret every situation, leading to misguided action designed to rid you of fear and satisfy your need for more, a bottomless hole that can never be filled.

It is important to realize, however, that fear, greed and the desire for power are not the dysfunction that we are speaking of, but are themselves created by the dysfunction, which is a deep-seated collective delusion that lies within the mind of each human being. A number of spiritual teachings tell us to let go of fear and desire. But those spiritual practices are usually unsuccessful. They haven't gone to the root of the dysfunction. Fear, greed and desire for power are not the ultimate causal factors. Trying to become a good or better human being sounds like a commendable and high-minded thing to do, yet it is an endeavour you cannot ultimately succeed in unless there is a shift in consciousness. This is because it is still part of the same dysfunction, a more subtle and rarified form of self-enhancement, of desire for more and a strengthening of one's conceptual identity, one's self-image. You do not become good by trying to be good, but by finding the goodness that is already within you and allowing that goodness to emerge. But it can only emerge if something fundamental changes in your state of consciousness.

You do not become good by trying to be good, but by finding the goodness that is already within you and allowing that goodness to emerge.

The history of Communism, originally inspired by noble ideals, clearly illustrates what happens when people attempt to change external reality – create a new earth – without any prior change in their inner reality, their state of consciousness. They make plans without taking into account the blueprint for dysfunction that every human being carries within: the ego.

Excerpted from A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose *by Eckhart Tolle. Reprinted by arrangement with Dutton, a member of Penguin Group (USA), Inc. Copyright (c) Eckhart Tolle, 2005.*

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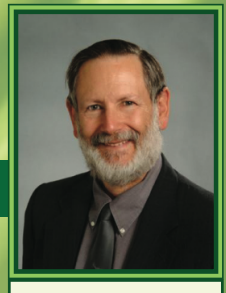

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The power of choice

UNIVERSE WITHIN Gwen Randall-Young

We must make the choices that enable us to fulfill the deepest capacities of our real selves. –Thomas Merton

WE CREATE our lives through choice. Even if we have not chosen a particular event or outcome, we do choose the way we respond. If life is a canvas, choice is our paintbrush. True, our choices may be coloured by past conditioning or present beliefs. And they may be influenced by others' expectations or reactions. However, allowing those influences is a choice in itself.

One might argue that some of those influences are unconscious, but becoming conscious is also a choice. We have this one lifetime as the person we are and what we create for ourselves as we journey through it is up to us.

Certain characteristics of our life and circumstances are part of the raw materials we have to work with. Our intelligence, aptitudes and the physical and emotional environment in which we are raised may either help or hinder us.

Once we reach adulthood, it is really our own choice as to how we interpret our background and circumstances. We may see them as a crutch, a springboard or an excuse. Regardless of what may have happened in the past, we are both responsible and accountable for our future. We are making choices every day, big ones and small ones, and they are the seeds of our future.

Choosing to honour one's soul, to know oneself and being true to that self, will create a different life than remaining unconscious, living to please or impress others or remaining in the same unappealing job, relationship or geographical area just because it seems easier.

One way to ascertain where we may be neglecting our power of choice is to look at any areas of our life that we seem to complain about. Another way is to look at what we wish for or dream about. If we have not created the life we want, it may be time to make some choices.

Of course, it is not always easy to make those choices. Fear of change is common. People may not like their present circumstances, but they fear that if they make the change, they might somehow end up with something worse. They also struggle over whether they are making the right choice. This suggests they may not trust themselves or the universe.

A trustworthy guide, or compass, is our intuition. If we feel drawn in a certain direction and we seem to be getting an inner push to move that way, we can assume we are being given some guidance. This is not to say that following that guidance will lead to the results we desire, but it may lead to the results we need.

A trustworthy compass is our intuition. If we feel drawn in a certain direction and we seem to be getting an inner push to move that way, we can assume we are being given some guidance.

The journey of life is much more interesting when we co-create with the universe. It is like a dance; sometimes we lead and other times we allow the universe to lead. The inner urgings indicate the universe is trying to lead. If we stubbornly insist on leading, we may miss out on something delightful just up ahead.

This is why choice is so important.

SPIRITUALITY

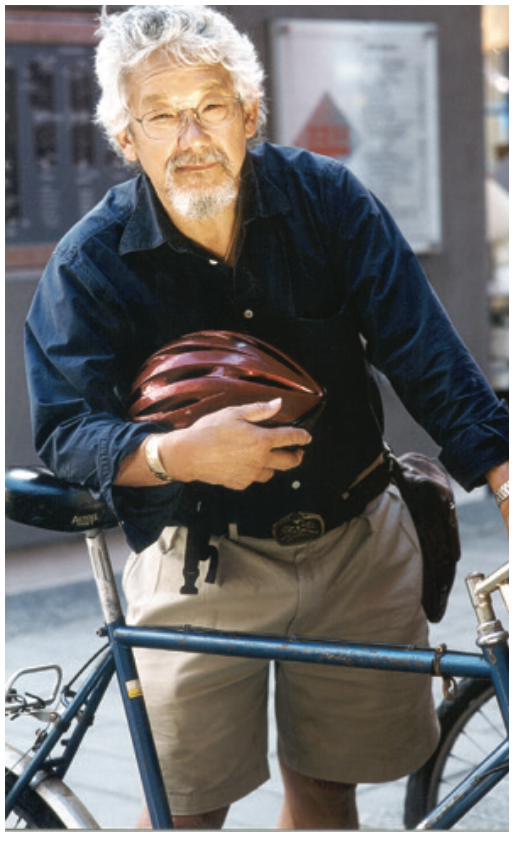
This is also why *conscious* choice is critical. We must be conscious of what our choices are creating for us. We must also be conscious of what we may be denying ourselves if we choose to ignore our intuitive voice.

Developing the ability to tune into that intuitive guidance is something we all can do. We get intuitive messages all day long. It is like the print message that runs at the bottom of the television screen during a program. We can either read it or ignore it, but the message still keeps running.

Our intuitive messages are like signposts along the roadway. They give us ideas, options and truths. It is up to us to notice them. We have the choice to follow them, or not. That is what makes our lives either an endless, boring highway or a creative adventure. It is our choice.

Gwen Randall-Young is a psychotherapist in private practice and author of Growing Into Soul: The Next Step in Human Evolution. *For more articles, permission to reprint and information about her books and "Deep Powerful Change" personal growth/hypnosis CDs, visit www.gwen.ca.*

David Suzuki earns Right Livelihood Honorary Award



The Right Livelihood Award was established in 1980 to honour and support those "offering practical and exemplary answers to the most urgent challenges facing us today." It has become widely known as the 'Alternative Nobel Prize.'

The 2009 Right Livelihood Award goes to four recipients, including David Suzuki, who receives the Honorary Award "for his lifetime advocacy of the socially responsible use of science and for his massive contribution to raising awareness about the perils of climate change and building public support for policies to address it." David Suzuki is one of the most brilliant scientists, and communicators about science, of his generation. Through his books and broadcasts, which have touched millions of people around the world, he has stressed the dangers, as well as the benefits, of scientific research and technological development. He has campaigned tirelessly for social responsibility in science. For the past 20 years, he has been informing the world about the grave threat to humanity of climate change and about how it can be reduced.

Catherine Hamlin

Alyn Ware

René Ngongo

The three other recipients are René Ngongo (Democratic Republic of Congo), honoured "for his courage in confronting the forces that are destroying the Congo's rainforests and building political support for their conservation and sustainable use;" Alyn Ware (New Zealand), recognized "for his effective and creative advocacy and initiatives over two decades to further peace education and to rid the world of nuclear weapons;" Catherine Hamlin (Ethiopia), awarded "for her 50 years dedicated to treating obstetric fistula patients, thereby restoring the health, hope and dignity of thousands of Africa's poorest women."

– *www.rightlivelihood.org*

Shakespeare's cottage garden

ON THE GARDEN PATH Carolyn Herriot

ORGANICS

I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows, where oxlips and the nodding violet grows, quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine, with sweet musk roses and with eglantine.

– From *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, William Shakespeare

IT WAS fascinating visiting the original home of William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway – an Elizabethan cottage situated on a 90-acre farm called 'Hewlands' in Anne's day – in Stratford-Upon-Avon.

William Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway in 1582, when he was 18 and she was 26 and pregnant with their first child. Apparently, in those days, this was quite acceptable as having as many children as possible to help with demanding farm chores was most desirable. William and Anne had three children altogether: Susanna was born in May 1583 and the twins Hamlet and Judith were born two years later. Anne outlived William by seven years.

Anne Hathaway's cottage

We think life is tough these days! Together with their family, William and Anne lived in a cottage with walls made from willow wattles packed with mud clay and straw and cow manure. There was no glass in the open windows and they slept propped up in four-poster beds, on tiny, rock-hard straw mattresses. Above them, ceilings opened to the thatched roof, from out of which rats dropped.

The open fireplace, which was never allowed to extinguish, spewed smoke into the home 24 hours a day and the family cleaned their teeth with ash from the fire mixed with soot. These were just a few tidbits we gleaned from the informative tour guide on our tour of the cottage.

After ducking through low doorways, squeezing through dark, narrow hallways and nearly slipping down treacherous stairways, I was relieved to step out into the blaze of colour of a fully planted Shakespearian cottage garden. It was filled with flowers, shrubs and herbs popular in Shakespeare's time – lupins, sweet peas, hollyhocks, delphiniums and roses – surrounded by neatly clipped box hedges, which capture the flavour of Elizabethan England.

It is known that Shakespeare was familiar with flowers and greatly loved them. Not only did he take an interest in the cultivation of plants and trees, but he also had an accurate knowledge of gardening practices, such as grafting and pruning. An orchard to the right of the cottage slopes gently up through apple and pear trees to a view of the countryside across fields once tilled by the Hathaways and which are thought to have inspired many of Shakespeare's plays.

Herbs and heritage vegetables were grown on an adjoining terrace, many of which I still grow today, thanks to many generations of gardeners who saved the seeds from their best plants for the following year's harvest. I am full of gratitude to these gardeners for I am still saving seeds from their original plants.

As we can see from our visit to Shakespeare's home, we have much to be grateful for today, but there is also much to be learned from the foundations of our heritage, lest we forget the beauty and simplicity of living closer to the land.

Carolyn Herriot is author of A Year on the Garden Path, a 52-Week Organic Gardening Guide. *She grows 'Seeds of Victoria' at her home the Garden Path Centre in Victoria. Her next book* The Zero Mile Diet: Twelve Steps to Sustainable Homegrown Food Production *comes out spring 2010. www.earthfuture.com/gardenpath*

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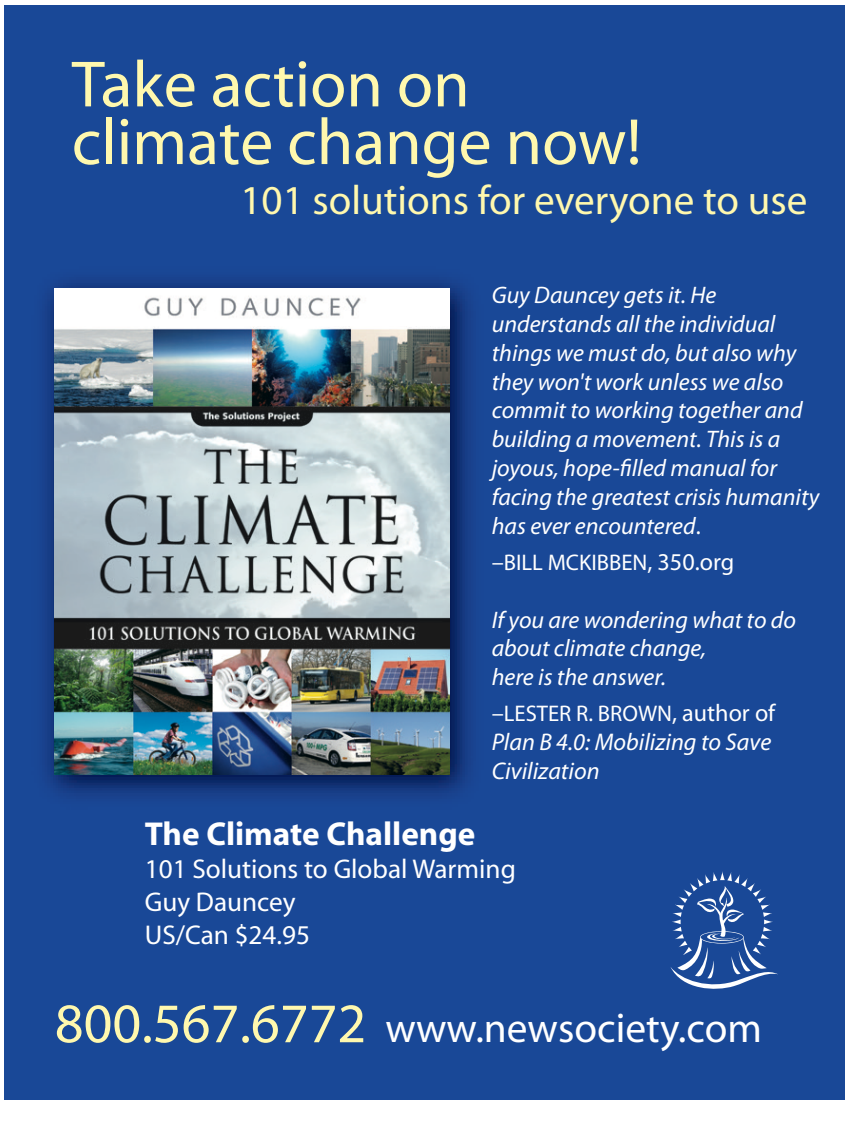
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Falling in love with the Earth

EARTHFUTURE Guy Dauncey

ENVIRONMENT

THIS MONTH, in Copenhagen, Denmark, the world's leaders are gathering for the all important Climate Conference, hoping to reach an agreement sufficiently robust to prevent human civilization, and most of Earth's ecosystems, from spiralling down into climate chaos. On our current track, we are heading for civilizational suicide by this end of the century, as a result of a 6°C rise in Earth's average temperature.

Within the heart of each negotiator, however, beats a deeper drum of loyalty and love, but for whom or what does this drum beat? If a delegate's heart beats first and foremost for "my country," he or she will fail to grasp the true urgency of what is at stake.

In our long and amazing journey on this planet, circling the Sun on a distant arm of the Milky Way Galaxy, which we share with 200 billion other stars, and which shares the Universe with 3,000 billion other galaxies, we have steadily evolved from clan-love to Earth-love.

In our early days in the forests of Africa, our loyalty was to our immediate clan, among whose members we felt safe and protected. All other humans were either strangers or enemies.

Even while our heart beat as one, however, there were adventurous clan members who wanted to explore and it was through their journeys, cemented by trade, marriage or conquest, that the clans gradually widened their loyalty to a larger tribe.

Once we were tribes, the process continued. In England, the tribes of York and Lancaster fought a long and bitter war before Henry Tudor prevailed in 1487, uniting England as a nation. In North America, the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga and Seneca tribes united to form the Iroquois Confederacy. Among Europe's Germanic tribes, due to a lack of natural frontiers, unification did not happen until 1871, when Bismarck finally unified the German tribes – the same year that Garibaldi united Italy.

Today, we are still a world of discrete nations, demanding special treatment and protecting our economies. Yet, with this attitude, we place the entire world in peril, for Earth's atmosphere cares not where boundaries lie. We must either tackle this crisis together as one world, or die separately as 193 nations.

Most global leaders have yet to make the crucial step of bonding with the Earth. Here in Canada, both our Liberal and Conservative leaders have put their party interests above either Canada or the Earth – witness their recent failure to pass the Climate Change Accountability Act, which would have required the Canadian government to set regulations to bring emissions 25 percent below 1990 levels by 2020, and 80 percent below by 2050.

We are in transition to a world in which everyone will share the bond of Earth-love. If we all felt this way, we'd have no problem in acting together.

The true urgency of the climate crisis is that world-renowned climate scientists like NASA's James Hansen are telling us that if we do not stabilize our global emissions within eight years and then drive them rapidly downwards, we will be on the slippery slope toward climate chaos, from which it will be ever harder to escape.

What does it mean to bond with the Earth? It means that your primary love is for this whole wonderful planet, from its melting icecaps to the glory of its long distance migrating birds; from its incredible forests to the wonder of its dolphins and whales. It means that when you tune into its magnificence, beauty and diversity, your heart fills with love. And it means that when you face a crucial decision, such as the one we face in Copenhagen this month, you place the needs of the planet above those of any nation.

After six million years of walking upright on two feet, we only saw Earth from space for the first time 43 years ago. Most people over 75 probably feel more love for their country than they do for the Earth. Among people under 25, I really hope it is the opposite. You are our future.

We are in transition to a world in which everyone will share the bond of Earth-love. If we all felt this way, we'd have no problem in acting together to eliminate the greenhouse gases that threaten our future. We'd do so immediately.

Guy Dauncey is author of The Climate Challenge: 101 Solutions to Global Warming *(www.theclimatechallenge.ca) and president of the BC Sustainable Energy Association (www.bcsea.org)*

Life depends on the oceans

SCIENCE MATTERS David Suzuki with Faisal Moola

IT'S OFTEN said that we know as much about Mars and the moon as we do about our oceans. Considering that Earth is 71 percent ocean, this should be cause for concern. At the very least, we should be doing more to protect our oceans from the negative effects of human activities, even if we don't fully understand all that is happening under the seas.

One thing we do know is that oceans are changing and the changes aren't for the best. For centuries, we've thought of our oceans as stable. But ocean currents, upwellings, oxygen levels, acidity and temperature are changing in ways we haven't seen before. Assumptions we once held about the seas are no longer valid.

We've always assumed that oceans would provide us with an endless bounty of food. We rely on our oceans for transportation, recreation and numerous resources. And oceans provide almost half the oxygen we breathe.

The collapse of Canada's Atlantic cod stocks was just one of many warnings we should have heeded. Many West Coast salmon stocks have also disappeared and many are returning in increasingly lower numbers. Even the survival of the very base of the marine food chain, plankton, is threatened.

Some threats to our oceans are easier to pinpoint than others. Swirling masses of plastic garbage in the oceans – one of them in the North Pacific estimated to be bigger than Quebec – are obvious artifacts of our disposable societies. "Dead zones" are showing up in our oceans around the globe. These are areas where oceans are starved of oxygen because of a nitrogen overdose from agricultural runoff.

Many fish stocks are dwindling, in part because of our appetite for seafood. This is spurring more development in aquaculture, but most fish-farming practices are putting added pressure on oceans and wild fish.

On top of the many direct threats to ocean health, we also have climate change to contend with. We know that global warming is causing the oceans to become more acidic. This is a worrisome trend. As with our atmosphere, too much carbon is resulting in dangerous effects. Carbon dioxide is necessary for photosynthesis, which is how plants grow and develop. But when we burn fossil fuels or clear-cut forests, we release too much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, upsetting the balance. This creates a heat-trapping blanket around the Earth, which contributes to global warming.

The oceans absorb carbon dioxide, keeping some of it from the atmosphere. But while oceans help slow the pace of global warming, they too are absorbing too much carbon dioxide, resulting in disruption of the pH balance. This increasing acidity causes calcium carbonate to dissolve, affecting life forms including corals, shellfish and several species of plankton that rely on calcium for their very structure.

Science is confirming that our old assumptions are no longer valid, and we find ourselves in a situation of escalating risk. As a result, we need to look at our oceans in an entirely new way. We can't continue to exploit ocean resources on false assumptions. We need to know more about what's going on. That means investing in science that will help explain the interactions between changing ocean conditions and the species that depend on the seas.

One thing we've learned about Mars and the moon is that we can't move there if we destroy our home on this beautiful and generous planet.

We need a new way to manage our oceans. A comprehensive marine-planning initiative that considers new and evolving science and the evidence of what is actually happening to marine ecosystems would be a good start. This process must be based on a precautionary approach that recognizes increased uncertainty and the fact that our oceans will continue to change as global warming and other human-induced factors continue to affect them.

We can't rely on governments alone to protect the health of our oceans. Industry, nongovernmental organizations, First Nations, coastal communities and governments at all levels must come together to plan and monitor conservation efforts based on science and local community knowledge.

After all, one thing we've learned about Mars and the moon is that we can't move there if we destroy our home on this beautiful and generous planet – in part because they don't have oceans. Neglecting the health of our oceans, where all known life began, is a risk we cannot afford to take.

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Through the looking glass

Weird and wonderful: *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnasus.*

FILMS WORTH WATCHING

Robert Alstead

AFTER HEATH Ledger's sudden death during the filming of *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*, director Terry Gilliam said he was in no mood for completing the film. But, on the urgings of others, he did and the result, under the circumstances, is a hugely impressive achievement.

In many ways, this is vintage Gilliam, with classic motifs and signature themes from his career. There are the weird and wonderful contraptions and machines, a magical looking glass that provides a doorway into another world and allows for the outlandish escapades beyond the boundaries of space and time and the Pythonesque humour and physical comedy.

Contemporary London provides the backdrop (and briefly, later Vancouver), but we spend most of the time with the outcast characters in the travelling imaginarium performing a mystical circus act that is losing its appeal in this era of loud, brash entertainment.

The gang – Christopher Plummer as the ancient, drunken Doctor Parnassus, his daughter Valentina, her boyish admirer Anton and the doctor's sidekick midget Percy – one night save a young man Tony from hanging by the neck under a bridge. When Tony decides to stay with the group, it creates a tension. His charm and swagger belie a murky past. As the professor and Valentina warm to him, Anton grows jealous and protective.

At the same time, the devil – a smirking, chain-smoking Tom Waits – is preparing to collect on a deal he's made with the Doctor.

Ledger, of course, plays Tony to begin with and it is, as Gilliam pointed out, eerie just how much death surrounds his character here.

There are some great sequences as characters pass through to the other side of the mirror of the imaginarium. It's as if they are being confronted by their deepest inner fears and desires in physical form. You never know what to expect behind the mirror: a two-dimensional country landscape, a forest of gigantic shoes or huge ladders that disappear into the sky.

This is also a place where people's appearances can change. Hence the character of Tony is also played by Johnny Depp, Jude Law and Colin Farrell. For the most part, Gilliam succeeds in turning a major obstacle – the loss of his lead character – into a strength. Fine actors help, of course. As the two-hour film goes on, the storyline gets manic and messy, but it is such a visual feast that, for this reviewer at least, it warrants another viewing. *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus* is out on December 25.

There's a good range of new films to look out for this month. Spanish writer/director Pedro Almodóvar's visually sumptious, romantic melodrama *Broken Embraces* (*Los abrazos rotos*) opens on December 18, starring his favorite muse Penélope Cruz.

In the comedy department, spoof thriller *Black Dynamite* (out on the 4th) is a hilarious send-up of the seventies blaxploitation genre. Think *Shaft* with afros and attitude multiplied by 10.

The Vancity Theatre has Slamdance audience award-winner *Punching the Clown* (until December 10), a satirical comedy following the fictional highs and lows of the real comedian-musician Henry Phillips as he struggles to make it in LA.

The comedy of the moment seems to be *The Fantastic Mr. Fox* in which Wes Anderson (*The Royal Tenenbaums*) has adapted Roald Dahl's classic kid's story using a painstaking stop-motion animation process. George Clooney voices the debonair Mr. Fox; Meryl Streep is Mrs. Fox and Bill Murray plays the badger lawyer in a comedy creature caper that has been getting rave reviews. It should be in theatres by the time you read this.

Robert Alstead made the Vancouver documentary You Never Bike Alone. *http://www.youneverbikealone.com. He writes at www.2020Vancouver.com and www.iofilm.com*

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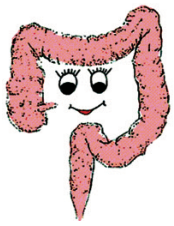

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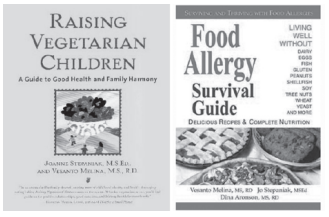

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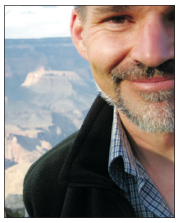

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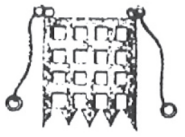

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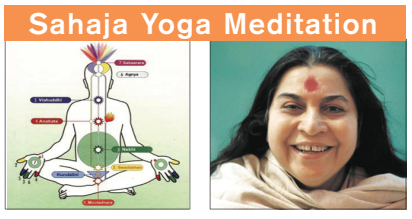

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The joy of unintended consequences

INDEPENDENT MEDIA Steve Anderson

AT FRESH Hot Type, the after party for the Fresh Media Festival on October 24, local media arts group W2 provided a letterpress with which partygoers could experiment. The idea was that as DJs were spinning in the background, participants could creatively express themselves by using the letterpress, ink and paper. Not satisfied with what seemed like the natural limits of the medium, participants soon began writing words and expressions on both their own and each other's bodies and acting out the words on the dance floor.

Participants at Fresh Hot Type

Big telecom companies like Telus like to scare policy makers by suggesting any open Internet requirements for Internet Service Providers will lead to "unintended consequences." I, however, have taken to arguing just the opposite – that allowing ISPs to become gatekeepers and regulators of Internet usage has both intended and unintended negative consequences for innovation, online choice and free expression. Clearly, there are negative consequences to allowing an ISP to slow access to a radically democratic and innovative file sharing service like bittorent, which is still very much in an embryonic stage of development.

But now I think I may have got it all wrong; what we want most from the Internet is actually just that – unintended consequences. The original architects of the Internet neither expected nor intended, and couldn't have even imagined, an Internet that would include bittorrent, Twitter, Skype, etc. They simply produced a neutral network where users could freely innovate and connect with one another. The best part about the Internet – user ingenuity, grassroots innovation and open collaboration – came not from the Internet's architects or ISPs, but from what Jonathan Zittrain calls the "generativity" of the Internet.

Participants soon began writing words and expressions on both their own and each other's bodies and acting out the words on the dance floor.

According to Zittrain, generativity refers to a "system's capacity to produce unanticipated change through unfiltered contributions from broad and varied audiences… Generativity pairs an input consisting of unfiltered contributions from diverse people and groups, who may or may not be working in concert, with the output of unanticipated change."

We can flesh out generativity further in future columns, but in basic terms, a generative platform is one that is open, accessible, useful, flexible and easy to master.

The participants at Fresh Hot Type were able to generate new ways of interacting with the letterpress because we provided it as an open platform and didn't squash their inventiveness when we saw what was happening. Like everyone else, we took joy in the generativity of the letterpress. Dancing body canvasses was the positive, yet unintended consequence, of the letterpress in the context of a dance party.

The explosion of innovation and collaboration unleashed by the open Internet is the creative expression that the Internet's generative platform has provided. The big telecom companies did not initially intend to provide access to these unsanctioned services when they began selling access to the Internet. New, ground-up, online innovation is the unintended consequence that ISPs would like to avoid as they compete with ISP services like TV and phone services.

On October 22, the CRTC took an important step in the right direction by putting forward open Internet ("traffic management") guidelines.

As it stands right now, however, ISPs have not yet been told to stop throttling access to the open Internet. Furthermore, under the current CRTC guidelines, the onus falls on the consumer to file a complaint and prove that an ISP is unjustly throttling traffic. It is unfair to force consumers to go head-to-head over and over again with some of the most powerful businesses in the country.

It's time for Industry Minister Tony Clement and the Conservative party to join the other major parties by demanding that the CRTC conduct regular compliance audits of ISP traffic management practices. If Clement does the right thing here, we could have a truly open Internet before we know it.

Send an immediate letter to Tony Clement at http://saveournet.ca

Long live unintended consequences.

Steve Anderson *is the national coordinator for the Campaign for Democratic Media. He has written* for The Tyee, Toronto Star, Epoch Times *and* Adbusters.
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...Olson - from p.13

...Jordan - from p.4

Compounding this challenge is our sense of insignificance as individuals in a world of 6.7 billion people. And if we fully open ourselves to the horrors of our times, we also risk becoming overwhelmed, panicked, or emotionally paralyzed.

I believe it is worth connecting with these issues and allowing them to matter to us personally, despite the complex mixtures of anger, fear, grief and rage that this process can entail. Perhaps these uncomfortable feelings can become part of what connects us, serving as fuel for courageous individual and collective action as citizens of a new kind of global community. This hope continues to motivate my work.

The first few pieces below depict statistics about threats to the world's marine ecosystems. New images on other issues will be coming soon, so please stay tuned, and thank you for visiting.

– Chris Jordan, Seattle, Feb. 2009

Chris Jordan Photographic Arts, 6711 10th Ave NW, Seattle, WA 98117, 206-706-1550, studio@chrisjordan.com, http://www.chrisjordan.com.

Chris Jordan is represented in Canada by Winsor Gallery in Vancouver, 3025 Granville St., www.winsorgallery.com, info@winsorgallery.com, 604-681-4870.

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Introduction to Foot Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Training Course. Introduction 7.30 pm $10; Course $325. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818. www.pacificreflexology.com

DEC 12
Shamanic Drumming & Dreaming Circle: 7-10pm. 'Dreamtime Journeywork' for Insight/healing with your Nature Spirit guardians. Vancouver Multi-Cultural Society, 1254, W. 7th. By donation. Earthsong Healing Circles. 604.418.9636. www.shamanichealing.info

COP15 COPENHAGEN

Dec 7 - Dec 18
UN Climate Change Conference

The United Nations climate change conference in Copenhagen (COP 15) will be a turning point in the fight to prevent climate disaster. The science demands it, the economics support it, future generations require it. In early December, negotiators, ministers and world leaders will assemble in the Danish capital to give the people of all nations a strong answer to this common, global threat of climate change.

At Copenhagen, governments must reach agreement on all the essential elements of a comprehensive, fair and effective deal on climate change, that both ensures long-term commitments and launches immediate action.

http://en.cop15.dk/

DEC 12-13
7th Annual Vancouver International Film Festival for Peace! Free. Hosted by MAWO (Mobilization Against War and Occupation). Britannia Community Center Auditorium, 1661 Napier Street at Commercial Drive. www.mawovancouver.org/

DEC 13
Raw Food Chef Certification! Our fundamental course teaches how to go raw and make delicious meals fast, easy & fun! 9 dishes served! 2-6pm $150 Call: 778-839-8424. www.rawfoundation.ca

DEC 19
Wolfsong Chanting Circle - Winter Solstice Celebration: 7-10pm. Participate singing shared sacred healing chants from the Spirit of the Land. Vancouver Multi-Cultural Society, 1254 W. 7th. By donation. Earthsong Healing Circles. 604.418.9636. www.shamanichealing.info

DEC 24-27
Christmas Celebration Retreat: Connect to the stillness and peace of this beautiful time of year during our silent retreat at the Self Realization Meditation Healing Centre, Sunshine Coast. 1-604-740-0898 www.selfrealizationcentrecanada.com.

DEC 29-JAN 1
New Year Gathering: An opportunity to rest and reflect on the year ahead in a loving and nurturing atmosphere at the Self Realization Meditation Healing Centre, Sunshine Coast. 1-604-740-0898 www.selfrealizationcentrecanada.com.

JAN 15
Introduction to Foot Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Training Course. Introduction 7.30 pm $10; Course $325. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818 www.pacificreflexology.com

JAN 23 & 24
Raw Food Instructor Certification – Teach What You Love! Extensive gourmet meals, sprouting, dehydrating, coaching. Opportunity to teach, have own business & website. Days, 11am-7pm $795! Register by Dec 5Th SAVE $100) Prereq: L1- Raw Food Chef Certification (Dec 13 or Jan 10th) Call: 778-839-8424 www.rawfoundation.ca.

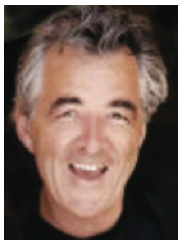
SUNDAYS

Free, anonymous, telephone support line: Guided meditations for people suffering from chronic pain. Non-religious. Counselors have community crisis line training. 7-11PM, 604-936-5683.

SOS (Science of Spirituality): See Resource Directory listing in Spiritual Practices for schedule in Richmond, Vancouver & Victoria. 604-277-1247. All Welcome. www.sos.org

Centre for Spiritual Living: Join us every Sunday @ 11 AM for spiritual teachings and great music at 1495 West 8th Ave, Vancouver. Info: 604-321-1225, www.cslvancouver.com

Clearmind International Institute
- Lecture Series -
1st Wednesday each month
Wednesday, January 6 at 7:30pm
Getting the Past out of the Present
with Duane O'Kane



LOCATION: Unity of Vancouver
5840 Oak St. (near 41st and Oak)
Call 604-513-9001 or e-mail
lecturetickets@clearmind.com
to request complimentary tickets
www.clearmind.com

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www.opendoor-yogateachertraining.ca

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events
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Wednesday, Dec 2nd, 7:30 PM
2950 Laurel St. (at 14th), Vancouver
Pranic Healing Clinics in Vancouver
St. George's, 2950 Laurel St. (at 14th)
Tuesdays*: 10 AM - 1:30 PM & 6 - 9 PM
Dec 1st and 8th. Reopens Jan 12th.
The Meditation for Planetary Peace is held at the beginning of each clinic.
*Last healing begins half-hour before closing
Keep In Touch
www.pranichealing.ca/vancouver.htm

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Certified Pranic Healer
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Basic Pranic Healing
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Past Life Healings By Appointment
Please contact Janet Mierau
at 604.921.6981 or jmierau@telus.net

Classified

TUESDAYS

Reflexology Student Clinic 6–10pm. One-hour sessions $18. By appointment only. Pacific Institute of Reflexology. www.pacificreflexology.com (604) 875-8818.

WEDNESDAYS

Is your life in balance yet? Explore a method to achieve more peace and harmony in life. Every Wed. 7pm, YWCA, 4th Floor, 535 Hornby St. 604-317-2747, www.santmat.net Always Free.

Hawaiian Medicine Circle 7pm Hawaiian guided meditation, Sharing the Aloha, tea and snacks. $10 donation. At Hale Ola, 1215 Madison Avenue, Burnaby. 604-431-7474 Call Kamu Kaimana.

FRIDAYS

"Destiny Dialogues" Free Talks First Friday of each month, experiential evening that explores the inter-connections between destiny and suffering, relationships, vocations, joy, teachers, character, nature, family, dreams. 7-9pm. 604-317-1613.

Give Peace A Chant! Energize yourself with the yoga of KIRTAN, Sanskrit call and response yoga chanting, healing mantras and sound vibrations in a friendly community setting. No experience necessary. New schedule: 1st, 3rd, and 5th Friday nights only, 7:30 pm, $10-20 by donation, 2111 W. 16th Ave @ Arbutus, www.givepeaceachant.org

Just Dance! Three Fridays a month. Alcohol & smoke-free. 9pm, 2114 W. 4th Ave. @ Arbutus. $10/5. www.justdance.ca

ONGOING

5 Gifts for an Abundant Life Course: Certified Facilitators, Judi and Ernie Letawsky are offering this (8) week course starting mid January. For more information, please email: 5giftsforabundant@gmail.com

Free Meditation Workshop: Experience Kundalini awakening through Sahaja Yoga, as taught by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi & enjoy your Powers at our Weekly classes, always free and open to all. 604-597-8440, www.sahajayoga.org.

Unitarian kids believe in their ability and responsibility to make a difference in the world. Programs for kids 3 years and up, 370 Mathers St., West Vancouver, 604-926-1621, www.nsuc.ca

"The Fear of Dreaming" – Financial support needed for unique, creative, thought-provoking, community-based, independent film project. Visit us at www.thefearofdreaming.com

CLASSES

MASSAGE CLASSES "FUSION WORKS" = combination of Hot stones, Thai and Balinese. R.M.Ts receive 24 credits. www.academyofmassage.ca, 1-866-537-1219.

TAKE UP A THERAPEUTIC HOBBY - BEADING - make your own jewelry or shop for gemstones, findings and made-in-Canada artisan jewelry. Retail/wholesale 604-469-3327, www.ssstudio.org

COUNSELLING / HEALING

HEAL FROM DEPRESSION/ANXIETY: H.R. Mental Wellness Centre (www.mentalwellnessbc.ca) offers Holistic approach to healing. Support groups and coaching. For free consultation: call Dr. Rayes at 604-630-6865.

RADIX™ Neo-Reichian. www.radix.org. Body-oriented. Deeper into the self, farther into the world. Core growth. Jim Ross, 604-683-5302.

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MEDITATION

SILENT MEDITATION TO THE SOUND OF OM. This month only: second Friday of the month: Dec. 11. 7:30-8:30PM. Vancouver Sai Baba Centre, 1659 East 10th Avenue. (1/2 block west of Commercial Drive.) Everyone welcome. Free. No donations.

RETREATS

REVITALIZE – HEAL: Supervised water/juice fasting - serene location. The Fast Way to Heal for Life. Rewarding – Transforming. Call 604-926-3009.

SPA FOR THE SOUL! Queenswood Retreat Centre, Victoria. Individual or group retreats. Counseling, spirituality library, trails, bodywork, pool. www.queenswoodcentre.com, 250-477-3822.

ROOMS FOR RENT

CENTRAL SEMINAR ROOM/OFFICE: Cosy, carpeted room, seats 40. Available 24 hours, seven days/week. Natural/dimmer lighting, parking, beverage facilities, good energies. 535 West 10th avenue (at Cambie) (604) 875-8818.

MOST BEAUTIFUL SEMINAR ROOM IN THE WORLD. Lectures, workshops, meditation, retreats. 50 people. Very quiet, peaceful. Fully carpeted. Colours chosen by colour therapist. Full spectrum lighting. Full kitchen. Piano, sound system. Patio, summer flower, side yard. Centrally located, 23rd and Oak area, Vancouver, BC. Free parking, Gerald (604) 264-0714.

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SPIRITUAL EMERGENCE SERVICE

FREE SUPPORT, INFORMATION AND REFERRALS for people experiencing psychospiritual challenges, spiritual awakening and non-ordinary or transformative states of consciousness. www.spiritualemergence.net, 604-533-3545.

TAROT

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Privatizing compassion

Squeezing a profit from HandyDART

by Dean Brown

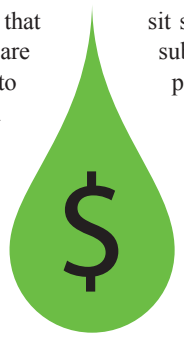
A CHILLING RAIN falls in the Vancouver night. I sit in a bus outside St. Paul's Hospital preparing to board a group of kidney dialysis patients and take them home. Exhausted by their ordeal of being hooked up to a machine for four hours, some of them shuffle forward on their own steam, determined and steady in their step, not too advanced in the disease. Some are slumped half asleep in a wheelchair. They are quiet, leaning on my arm, humbled by the unwanted circumstance of kidney failure.

It's a busy and sunny afternoon at GF Strong Rehab Centre. All sorts of passengers board and unboard my bus. Some are in complicated chairs with respirators, gamely overcoming head injuries. Some wobble along with walkers while others dart around in sleek, manual wheelchairs, long recovered from that devastating back injury. There are myriad mobility aids that need to be folded, secured, tied down and belted.

My passengers include a federal civil servant, clearly a professional in his prime, who needs me to attend to that one simple but crucial detail of opening his front door; an old man, who although unsteady in his gait and sometimes incontinent, insists on attending night school; a woman, who, post-stroke, insists she is fine and then collapses weeping into the snow and must be lifted onto her porch.

Someone will fall asleep, perhaps even fall unconscious, and need step-by-step assistance to their front door. And they'll get it, all for the price of a single zone bus ticket. In our corporatized, networked, worked-out, buffed, polished and gleaming city of glass, we can sometimes avoid the world of the imperfect and the slow or those who have been humbled by circumstance, age or something unwanted and unexpected. We might manage to bypass the people who can't just stroll down the street and board a bus, jump into their shiny SUVs or run up a set of stairs. But there it is, that less than perfect world, and we'll all be surprised when we arrive there too.

However, there is an effective and civilized resource that currently serves those who find themselves outside the fast paced norm. A long-standing part of the transit system, HandyDART is a Metro Vancouver-wide service that offers people a connection to movement, life, dignity, work and recovery and to being human.



I'm a HandyDART bus driver. Driving for HandyDART is to navigate through a series of different cities within Vancouver itself – the Vancouver of schedules, appointments, heavy traffic, and of hurry. The Vancouver of the imperfect. The Vancouver of back alleyways, back entrances and of residential streets. Of passengers that need constant attention and those who can operate their own chairs, thank you very much. All these cities demand a level of care, competency and attention that remains high, every day that I drive.

Perhaps you have heard that we are on strike. This is the reason: Translink recently privatized the operation of HandyDART, a publicly funded transit system that is, by nature, heavily subsidized. The motive is profit, a powerful force. And to generate this profit, the new, private operator, MV Canadian Bus, wants to lower labour costs.

It's a lot to swallow. The company wants to pay HandyDART workers much less than other transit workers, reduce their benefits, and strip away a pension plan that provided some measure of security for the future. The HandyDART labour force has a sterling reputation (ask virtually any HandyDART passenger) and a high skill level and it is dispirited and dismayed by such treatment. MV Bus is a large US company and at some of its operations south of the border, staff turnover approaches 100 percent annually. What kind of future is being offered to us here?

What is the nature of our right to movement? Is it less when we are less than perfect? Look into the polished glass city and ponder the unexpected.

I am angered that the ideology of profit is being forced upon HandyDART, to the detriment of workers and passengers. HandyDART users, vulnerable for many reasons, have the right to be attended to by a workforce that is skilled and adequately paid.

Got something to say to Translink? Email Martin Lay, director in charge of accessibility, at martin.lay@translink.ca Contact your local mayor and express your concern. Translink is ultimately accountable to a council of Metro Vancouver mayors.

On Track Zodiac

DECEMBER 2009 Adrien Dilon

ARIES (Mar 21 – Apr 19)
If you suggest to yourself that there is no problem, you can make that belief into a reality and actually dissolve your fears. Phobias are ready to be thrown and squashed like pumpkins on concrete. Build up and restore your mind and embark on a new beginning to clarity.

TAURUS (Apr 20 – May 21)
Look your best, stay sharp and be on your toes. Something surprising this way comes and you might want to be ready for some new exposure. Your life could change on a dime; if you stay alert and ready for anything, you won't miss an opportunity.

GEMINI (May 22 – Jun 20)
Are you feeling a bit like a tortoise in a maze of disarray and clutter? If you decide it's beneficial, it's a good time to take a holiday from your rigorous schedule. When all else around you becomes 'too much,' you can wildly abandon your duties and then come back to them refreshed.

CANCER (Jun 21 – Jul 22)
Time to make tweaks and adjustments to intention. A smooth sea never made a skilled mariner. Govern yourself more skilfully and heal what needs to be healed. Recognizing the past was difficult, be a governess/loving master to your transformation.

LEO (Jul 23 – Aug 22)
In the Jeopardy category "Proverbs for $900," the question "What is never known til needed?" was answered with the word "friend." Do your best to realize what has much worth for you and what needs tending. Be a friend to all and especially to yourself.

VIRGO (Aug 23 – Sep 22)
Some good old-fashioned alone time is the best medicine now. You have a refined nervous system and you need time to recharge and lie low to give credence to some mental processing. The inner shift requires meditation.

LIBRA (Sep 23 – Oct 22)
Feeling safe, secure and loving, you can now branch out and seek more adventure. You might feel unstoppable and perhaps don a hedonist attitude. More opportunities are coming your way for you to unleash certain creative aspects and make you lose yourself in the moment.

SCORPIO (Oct 23 – Nov 21)
Your indomitable will may have developed because you didn't have a mentor; you simply mentored yourself, becoming stronger but also perhaps more stubborn. Look for ways to continue to honour and embellish your efforts. Any small token of self-appreciation will help you thrive.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 22 - Dec 21)
In these tumultuous times, you crave more time to drift and dream. Learning better 'time management' could help. To see the promise of every day in your personal life, seek balance in all your activities. Stretch out every gesture and thought, thus making everything feel richer.

CAPRICORN (Dec 22 - Jan 19)
"A wise, old owl lived in an oak. The more he saw, the less he spoke. The less he spoke, the more he heard. Why can't we all be like that wise old bird?" Perhaps learn to take in more of life gently sitting back. View things from a different vantage point than that to which you are accustomed.

AQUARIUS (Jan 20 – Feb 19)
The many acts of will harnessed to the ego that drives it may seek to express themselves, but therein lies the rub. Could be you feel at odds with fulfilling your personal needs as you feel a tug from your altruistic side. Self-deception may ensue so keep your feet rooted in reality.

PISCES (Feb 20 – Mar 20)
You must gauge yourself and the amount of time and energy you have to dole out to others. Flying under the radar, you may seek to become more fulfilled on your own terms. Your intuition helps you decide when to take precious time for yourself and when to socialize.

Adrien Dilon is a clairvoyant consultant and author with 34 years experience in astrology, multi-media art and healing, adrien.dilon@gmail.com.

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